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Articles, note, communication and book review express the views of the authors and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr AMIYA K BAGGHI is professor of economics at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

ARUN PROKAS CHATTERJEE is senior advocate of the supreme court of India and the West Bengal high court, Calcutta.

Dr BARUN DE is professor of history at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

Dr AMALENDU GUHA is professor of economic history at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

Rev Fr FRANCOIS HOUTART is professor of sociology at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

ANIL RAI teaches economics at PGDAV College, Delhi University.

Dr ASOK SEN is professor of economics at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

P M V SRINIVASAN is research scholar in the field of history and philosophy of natural sciences, working in Madras on a life science project.

P M V SRINIVASAN

Origin of Life on Earth

PART ONE

IT WAS only in the last century that man began to comprehend scientifically a process that probably occurred between 3500 million and 4500 million years ago: the origin of life on earth. The problem has attracted the human mind from the earliest times. Every religious and philosophical system and many an influential thinker has devoted serious attention to it. At different stages of the development of society and under different material conditions, the question of the origin of life has been answered in different ways. It has always been the focus of a bitter conflict of ideas between the two camps in philosophy: materialism and idealism. India and China, along with Greece, have had a particularly rich historical tradition of struggle between the two camps.

Starting from the earliest times, materialist philosophers in different parts of the world have asserted that life is material in nature like everything else and that there is no need to smuggle in any spiritual force to explain its origin. They based their conclusions on observation of natural phenomena, everyday experience, and proto-materialist and naive materialist conceptions. But at a stage of the development of knowledge where precise and detailed scientific conclusions about man and matter were not possible, they had no way of establishing their belief with scientific conviction.

In direct opposition, those who belonged to the other camp in philosophy—priest-astronomers and idealist philosophers, religious teachers and mystics, poets and storytellers, charlatans and quacks—freely exercised their imagination to spread the idea that life was divinely ordained, created by a pre-existing concept or spirit. Idealism counterposed to the frail material world, in which everything had a beginning and an end, the eternal and unchanging spirit. It held that while living creatures were born to die, the essence of life, a non-material principle, was eternal. Life did not arise anew and could not be destroyed. It merely changed its external material envelope, as it transformed inert material into living things.

Over several centuries, these philosophies, metaphysical concepts, religious myths and mystical notions accumulated, spread among the masses of the people, and enslaved their minds. Even today, in a period of rapid advance of science, these myths and illusions are at large among the people. This is especially true of a country such as India. The idealist scales that have gathered over centuries cannot be cleared away overnight, under socioeconomic conditions that need these scales to protect themselves.

All religions have taught that the world is the product of a universal, supernatural idea, conception, or spirit; and that man is the creature and slave of this divine intervention and horseplay. This is true of the many tales Hinduism has for creation. It is equally true of the seven-day Biblical wonder of genesis and of the Islamic myth inspired by the potter's craft and the sculptor's art.

Doctrine of Spontaneous Generation

Religion is nothing but "the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life."² Direct uncritical observation and experience of surrounding nature boosted the old religious beliefs and added to the fantastic lore about the 'mystery of life'. Uncritical observation led to the belief that while living things (insects, worms, sometimes even fish, birds and mice) could be formed by things like themselves, they could also arise fully formed by spontaneous generation,³ out of the mud, the earth, and other inanimate substances. People of all countries and at various times—from 4000 years ago to the middle of the nineteenth century—swore by spontaneous generation.

From the earliest time, idealism united the dogma of eternal life with the belief in spontaneous generation. This unity was most clearly illustrated in the doctrine of 'panspermia', the doctrine that the fertilizing or life-giving principle takes the form of invisible spiritual germs dispersed everywhere. The doctrine received influential support from idealistic Roman philosophers, from the mediaeval European schoolmen, and from a number of modern natural philosophers.⁴

With the great advance in the observation of natural phenomena

from the fifteenth century onwards, new concepts and theories based on scientific investigation and precise observation began to demolish the old theories concerning the universe of stars and planets. But the tremendous initial upsurge of modern natural science left biological problems essentially untouched. Natural science could not yet drive the ancient idea of spontaneous generation from the field.

Even well-known scientific investigators who based their work on experimentation such as Willam Harvey (1578-1657), the originator of the theory of the circulation of blood, did not question the idea of spontaneous generation: Eminent materialists such as the Englishman, Francis Bacon (1596-1626) and the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) tried to explain spontaneous generation, but they did not question it.⁶ However, in contrast to the idealist philosophers, they approached the theory of spontaneous generation from a materialist standpoint, denied the role of a 'vital force', and asserted that there was no impassable barrier between the organic and inorganic world.⁶

The dispute between the two camps in philosophy regarding the theory of spontaneous generation, now sharpening, turned on the question: Was spontaneous generation the product of the spirit or was it a natural process of self-formation of living bodies?

Pasteur's Refutation

It was not before the closing years of the seventeenth century that scientific observation, experimentation and the data of practice began to challenge belief in the theory of spontaneous generation. In 1688 an Italian physician, Francisco Redi (1626-1697), described a series of experiments that challenged the theory.⁷ Hitherto, superficial observation of maggots growing in rotten meat and flies growing in dung had been considered proof positive that life was generated spontaneously from all forms of decay. Redi covered the meat with cloth, so that when it decayed, flies carrying maggot-breeding eggs were kept away. He proved in this simple manner that without eggs, maggots could not appear.

The validity of Redi's experiments was not, however, accepted by most scientists and philosophers. Spontaneous generation was a theory that agreed far too well with the idealist world outlook to be abandoned without a fight.

It was only in 1862 that a great French scientist, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), was able to refute the theory of spontaneous generation comprehensively through scientific experimentation.⁸ His brilliantly designed and painstakingly conducted experiments showed that microscopic germs existed in great numbers in the air. By aspirating air through a tube containing a plug of cotton and then removing the plug and dissolving it in a mixture of ether and alcohol, he obtained a sediment which contained a large number of micro-bodies indistinguishable

from micro-organisms. As soon as these germs came into contact with any form of nutrition, they multiplied rapidly and led to the putrefaction of the nutritious medium. Pasteur showed that the spontaneous appearance of micro-bodies in the earlier experiments was due to the inadequate precautions that had been taken to prevent the entry of germs. By first heating air and then introducing it into a boiling infusion, the entry of germs was prevented. His critics raised the objection that the prolonged boiling destroyed the vital principle in the medium and made it unsuitable for life. To refute this, Pasteur removed the cotton plug through which the air had passed and dropped it into the sterilized medium. The liquid putrefied, showing that it had not lost its capacity for sustaining life. Thus it was demonstrated, through conclusive scientific experimentation, that micro-organisms did not arise from various organic mixtures on their own.⁹ In 1863, Pasteur presented his meticulously validated results to the French Academy with the declaration: "Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation arise from this mortal blow."¹⁰

Attempts to refute the scientific validity of Pasteur's experiments and to find a single case of spontaneous generation of life under scientifically controlled conditions could no longer be sustained. But although Pasteur established that spontaneous generation was not the way in which life originated, he was unable to advance any serious scientific explanation. He concluded that the origin of life was something beyond understanding, therefore was a matter best avoided. It was enough to say that all living things arose from other living things.

Darwin's Theory of Evolution

The development of biology brought about a significant advance in the materialist understanding of the nature of life. In a period when theory in biological science was undeveloped and experimental research was embryonic and undifferentiated, the philosophical ideas of Francis Bacon, B Spinoza (1632-1677), G W Leibniz (1644-1716), the French materialists of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), F W Schelling (1775-1854) and G F O Hegel (1770-1831) had had a positively stimulating influence on progress in the knowledge of the regularities of living nature.¹¹ The cell theory and Darwinism marked a new epoch in the development of the natural sciences, the epoch of the development of the science of biology.

More than anything else, it was the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin (1809-1892) which shook all previous conceptions of the development of living things. Contemporaries likened this theory to a bomb thrown into the camp of the clericals.¹² The profoundly materialist work of Darwin—based on precise and original scientific observation, research and practice and on daring generalization and analysis—showed the way to the solution of the problem of the development of life after it originated. Darwin established that all species had evolved and outlined the

mechanism by which evolution had taken place, namely natural selection. Despite its shortcomings, Darwin's theory placed on the scientific agenda of the age the hypothesis of *anthropogenesis*, the transition of the higher ape to ape-man and then to man. It gave tremendous inspiration and confidence to all those who were looking for a materialist explanation of the origin of life.

Darwin was not prepared to commit himself to any scientific formulation on the origin of life. But one of his letters contains the germ of a remarkable idea which showed the direction in which his thinking on this problem lay: "in some warm little pond, with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity, etc. present...a protein compound was chemically formed ready to undergo still more complex changes."¹³

Return to Vitalism

With these irreversible setbacks to its main theory of the origin of life, the camp of idealism began to look in another direction for a way out. Idealism, when it did not choose to reject the theory of evolution out of hand as 'unholy', maintained that Darwinism might well give a materialist explanation of the ways in which higher organisms developed from lower ones but the human mind would never be able to understand how life itself came about. The essence of life lay beyond the limit of the intellect and was unknowable. To counter, deny and disarm the new rising life science, idealist philosophy resorted to agnosticism and to all kinds of wavering and tricks.

It harked back to the discredited theory of 'panspermia'.¹⁴ The idea ran thus: It was well known that at one time the earth was an intense ball of heat on which life could not have existed. Once it had cooled, it must have been, like Pasteur's boiled broth, contaminated by some germs of life. Germs or spores like this, known as panspermia, drifted in outer space until they encountered habitats suitable for their growth. The earth was one such suitable habitat they encountered.

Much toil and ingenuity was expended in proving the possibility of the passage of the germs of life intact from one heavenly body to another. All these were to come to grief in the advance of science from ignorance to awareness, from the superficial and imprecise to deeper and more exact knowledge. Science has decisively rejected the hypothesis that the 'germs of life' reached the earth from somewhere else. It seeks the answers to the problem of the origin of life with its feet planted firmly on the earth.

Idealism went back also to the theory of a vital force, which had suffered one defeat after another at the end of the eighteenth century and which was dealt a crushing blow by the evolutionary theory of Darwin. Vitalism seized on the unsuccessful attempts to discover 'spontaneous generation' to argue for the presence of an impenetrable barrier

between the animate and the inanimate, for the complete autonomy of vital phenomena: "That old woman, the life force, whom we buried with such triumph, at whom we mocked in every way, was only pretending to be dead and now decides to demand some rights to life, prepared herself to start up in a new form...Our expiring nineteenth century misses fire, it misses fire on the question of the origin of life".¹⁵

Historically, vitalism had never had the slightest pretensions to an experimental basis, or to practical success based on the 'application' of vitalistic ideas. It had played its part as sheer speculative theory. The periods of its revival were always connected with a discovery of the inadequacy of the principles underlying the approach to a cognition of vital phenomena—which failed, in terms of outlook and method, to go beyond the framework of various historical forms of metaphysical materialism.¹⁶

Nevertheless, when idealism substituted for the theory of spontaneous generation the principle of the eternity of life and emphasized the impossibility of solving the problem of its origin through science, many scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century declared their support for this trend.¹⁷

There were, of course scientists who defied the temporary surge of idealism, fought the trend, and upheld a consistent materialist approach to the problem. Two such eminent scientists who stood out in the 1860s and 1870s were T H Huxley (1825-1895) and J Tyndall (1820-1893).¹⁸ Huxley boldly proposed that the evolution of living things could have been from such substances as ammonium carbonate, oxalates and titrates, alkaline and earthy phosphates and water without the aid of light. Tyndall likewise suggested, in an address at Belfast in Ireland in 1874, that life originated from lifeless matter. Such views encouraged scientific efforts to find a materialist solution to the problem of the origin of life.

Mechanical Materialism

In the camp of scientists who approached the problem experimentally, it was mechanical materialism that held the day. The conception, basically, was that there was no real difference between organisms and organic matter, that living things were material particles that happened to be combined together in a very complicated structure.

A militant supporter of this view in the nineteenth century was E H Haeckel (1834-1919) of Germany who wrote that "life is already present in the atom"¹⁹ and that the first primitive organisms must have arisen as a result of some special physical conditions that no longer existed.

Another German scientist, E Pflüger (1829-1910) approached the problem in a different way.²⁰ He looked for the cause of the formation of the first life not merely in the external conditions and forces, but in

the material from which the organisms appeared. Starting from the protein that was found in organisms, he categorized one part of the protein as 'live' as against the other part which was 'dead'. The live part of the protein derived its unique characteristics from the presence of a definitive chemical which he identified as cyanogen. Though mechanical, the concept was progressive for the times as it did consider the primary development of organic substances.

Meanwhile, another group of scientists held that the vital properties of a living cell could be explained completely by its mechanical structure.²¹ They held that a rigid spatial arrangement of the parts of the cell was the cause of life, in the same way as the arrangement of the wheels and pistons of an engine determined its functions. But examination of cells under microscopes provided no evidence at all of any machine-like structure.

The mechanical materialists then turned to attempts to produce living things artificially. By mixing and precipitating chemicals, they concocted numerous substances which did bear a superficial resemblance to living organisms. But "the resemblance between the objects created... and living things was no greater than the resemblance between a living person and a marble statue of him."²²

Such then was the impasse reached in experimental studies of the origin of life. Progressive scientists were breaking away from idealism and turning to materialism, but were still unable to comprehend the problem scientifically. On the other hand, the tenacious hold of mechanistic ideas hampered the development of a scientific theory of the origin of life which could be validated experimentally. This hold could be weakened only after scientists had gained some basic biochemical knowledge of the manner in which living things functioned.

Marxism-Leninism in Relation to the Question

The first modern scientific theory of the origin of life arose from the conscious application of the dialectical materialist stand, viewpoint and method to a detailed investigation, in important branches of natural science, of the nature of life on earth and the history of matter evolving and developing towards life.²³

Marxism-Leninism in relation to the study of the origin of life cannot be reduced to a mere method of investigation. It is a stand, viewpoint and method which openly and frankly supports the alliance of philosophy and the natural sciences as an objective necessity and as a condition for their mutual development.

In spite of assertions by anti-Marxists to the contrary, this is far from imposing a 'pre-determined' or 'dogmatic' philosophical construct, or metaphysic, on the natural sciences. Frederick Engels settled this question in principle long ago by showing in his review of the historical achievements of real natural science over four centuries that "modern

materialism...no longer needs any philosophy standing above the other sciences."²⁴

Engels saw every advance in the natural sciences as simultaneously the advance of materialism against idealism. For science is instinctively materialistic despite the efforts of bourgeois philosophers and ideologues to smuggle in idealism to the sphere of the different natural sciences. The great scientific discoveries of the nineteenth century—and in this connection Engels put the contribution of Darwin in the field of evolution above all other scientific work of the period—revealed a dialectical materialist picture of the universe: "Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasing daily, and thus has shown that in the last resort, nature works dialectically and not metaphysically."²⁵

This stand, viewpoint and method imbued the process of scientific investigation and experiment with dialectics. It introduced a clear-sighted historical approach to the formulation of key scientific problems. The general principles developed by dialectical materialism offered natural scientists very extensive and revolutionary prospects for the scientific elaboration of the problems on hand. Marxism in relation to the natural sciences meant the conscious replacement of the old metaphysical speculation about nature by increasingly profound, increasingly exact, radically new scientific knowledge of nature.

All these features of Marxism in relation to the natural sciences can be seen in sharp detail in Engels's remarks on the scientific study of the nature and origin of life.

ENGELS ON NATURE AND ORIGIN OF LIFE

Engels saw that the scientific solution to the problem of the nature and origin of life would come only through the joint efforts of natural scientists working in various fields of specialization. The study of life, a complex subject, would require a complex experimental effort at an advanced stage of the development of the natural sciences.

Engels looked beneath the appearance of the varied scientific investigation and experiment of his time to the essential tendency of the most advanced natural science: the increasingly clear recognition in practice that "motion in the most general sense, conceived as the mode of existence, the inherent attribute, of matter, comprehends all changes and processes occurring in the universe, from mere change of place right up to thinking."²⁶

A critical survey of the advances in the scientific knowledge of nature made during the previous four hundred years — and particularly of the three great discoveries of natural science in the nineteenth century, the discovery of the cell, the law of the transformation of energy, and the Darwinian theory of evolution — enabled Engels to

convince myself also in detail—of what in general I was not in

doubt—that in nature, amid the welter of innumerable changes, the same dialectical laws of motion force their way through as those which in history govern the apparent fortuitousness of events...To me there could be no question of building the laws of dialectics into nature, but of discovering them in it and evolving them from it.”²⁷

Engels was the first thinker to systematically relate the general scientific conclusion, that motion is the mode of existence of matter, to the basic classification of the modern natural sciences.²⁸ Concluding that the subject matter of all natural science was matter in motion, Engels suggested the systematic classification of the sciences on the basis of the type of motion they investigated: “*Classification of the sciences*, each of which analyzes a single form of motion, or a series of forms of motion that belong together and pass into one another, is therefore the classification, the arrangement, of these forms of motion themselves according to their inherent sequence, and herein lies its importance.”²⁹

In the historical evolution of the natural sciences, the investigation of the nature of motion had, as a matter of course, to start from the lowest, simplest forms of motion and to learn to grasp these before it could achieve anything in the way of explanation of the higher and more complicated forms. The mechanical, physical, chemical and biological forms of motion were the main forms studied by the natural sciences of Engels’s time. Each lower form of motion changes into a higher form by a dialectical leap; each higher form of motion contains, but cannot be broken down to, a lower form. The systematization and deepening of scientific knowledge of the nature and origin of life could not be achieved except by grasping in detail the interconnection of the phenomena, of the forms of motion, relevant to life.

Such was the essence of Engels’s stand, viewpoint and method on the general question of the relationship between the natural sciences and the study of the nature and origin of life.

Comparative Method in Natural Sciences

Engels was deeply conscious of the fact that compared with the advance in mechanics, physics and chemistry, knowledge of the nature of life and the substantiation of almost all the phenomena of life was very much at the beginning of its course. And his great scientific integrity—his refusal to accommodate science to a point of view not derived from science itself—compelled him in his discussion of the basic forms of motion to “leave the organic form of motion out of account. We are compelled to restrict ourselves — in accordance with the state of science — to the forms of motion in non-living nature.”³⁰

In other words, Engels could not find in the experimental science of his time the foundation and material for elaborating a theory of the nature and origin of life. But with the true insight of genius, he caught a glimpse of the exciting future of this science. The biological investigations

and research that came in the wake of the journeys and expeditions that had been systematically organized since the middle of the eighteenth century did point to a new tendency in the sciences concerned with life. Along with the progress of palaeontology, anatomy, physiology and comparative geography, they emphasized the need to apply the comparative method in the natural sciences.⁸¹ The more deeply and exactly this research was carried out, the more did the rigid system of an immutable fixed organic nature crumble at its touch.⁸¹

Scientific investigation began to discover the interconnections, at the basic levels, between separate species of plants and animals. It encountered organisms of which it was not possible to say whether they belonged to the plant or animal kingdom. Immanuel Kant's attack on the eternity of the solar system and C F Wolff's (1733-1794) attack on the fixity of species had brilliantly anticipated the idea of evolution that influenced the work of L Oken (1779-1851), J B Lamarck (1744-1829) and K E Baer (1792-1876) and was victoriously carried through by Darwin in 1859.⁸² Evolution, then, was no fortuitous discovery in the brain of one individual; rather, the progress of natural science in the epoch of capitalism was tending towards a recognition of the evolution of matter from lower to higher forms. The identification of protoplasm and the cell reduced the gulf between inorganic and organic nature and removed one of the most essential difficulties that had stood in the way of the theory of descent of organisms.

The revolutionary characteristic, as Engels saw it, of the new outlook on nature had the greatest potential significance for the understanding of the nature of life and its origin: "all rigidity was dissolved, all fixity dissipated, all particularity that had been regarded as eternal became transient, the whole of nature was shown as moving in eternal flux."⁸³

Incompatibility of Life's Eternity

Engels's specific observations on the nature of life, contained in two classic works, *Anti-Duhring* and *Dialectics of Nature*, helped to light up the path to a dialectical understanding of the evolution and development of matter towards life. Evaluating the scientific knowledge of this subject available during his time he discarded the dross and selected the essential. He showed that there was no way of solving the problem except through detailed scientific investigation, experiment, and practice, resulting in a concrete analysis of the concrete conditions. There was no question of filling in the gaps in this field of scientific knowledge by philosophical speculation, a trend alien to the Marxist stand, viewpoint and method.

Engels devoted his attention, in the first instance, to clearing the path of deadweight idealist and metaphysical ideas of the nature of life. He subjected to withering criticism the scientific theories which sprang

from the principle of the eternity of life. Examining in some detail the hypothesis of 'eternal life' advanced by the German chemist and dilettante in biology, Justus von Liebig (1803-1873), he noted that the two presuppositions on which the hypothesis depended—the eternal existence of protein and the eternal existence of the original forms from which everything organic could develop—were inadmissible from the modern scientific standpoint. Whatever was known of carbon compounds showed that they were too complicated to permit any belief in their eternal fixity. Whatever was known about protein showed that it required conditions for its existence that were far more complicated than those of any other known carbon compound.⁸⁵ Belief in the eternity of life was thoroughly incompatible with the scientific knowledge of nature of this period.

The scientific knowledge of his time also enabled Engels to rule out the idea of 'spontaneous generation'. Louis Pasteur had been able to demolish the concept of spontaneous generation—although, as Engels was quick to note, these experiments did not by any means rule out the possibility of life arising from non-living matter.⁸⁶

Essence of Scientific Approach

Examining the possibility of accepting spontaneous generation as the explanation for the origin of life, Engels found that all scientific investigations until then amounted to attempts to bring forth lower organisms (protista, fungi, infusoria) by exposing liquids containing organic matter in decomposition to the air. The assumption that new living organisms could arise by the decomposition of others belonged essentially to the dogma of immutable species and was totally incompatible with the state of natural science during Engels's time. For one thing, chemistry showed by the analysis of the decomposition of dead organic bodies that this process produced matter that was "more and more dead", further and further away from being used to form life. Engels noted particularly that protein, which nineteenth century science had identified as the most essential vehicle of cell formation, was the first to decompose.

What was more, Engels pointed out, the organisms that these scientists attempted to generate (bacteria, yeasts and so on) were, though of a low order, differentiated. Some of them, like infusoria, were equipped with well-developed organs. They were all at least unicellular structures.

Engels judged such attempts as unworthy of natural science: "it has become foolish to desire to explain the origin of even a single cell directly from dead matter...to believe it is possible by means of a little stinking water to force nature to accomplish in twenty-four hours what it has cost her thousands of years to bring about."⁸⁷

While Engels concentrated his attack on idealism in the approach to the origin of life—and mainly on the theory of the 'vital force'—he provided an important warning against mechanistic ideas dominating

scientific investigation in this field. Engels's time, technologically the age of steam power, had its mechanistic ideas expressed in the language of the dominant technology. Life was no longer seen as an intricate clock-work mechanism, as it had been earlier. It was seen as an engine. Food and respiration were analogous to the burning of fuel and heat and the first law of thermodynamics was found to be applicable.³⁸ As Oparin was to discover decades later, modern mechanistic ideas might have played a positive role in the struggle against idealistic and clerical approaches, but they were a serious obstacle to the development of scientific knowledge of the origin of life.³⁹

Engels made it clear that while life was material in its nature, it was not a common or inalienable property of all matter in general: Life was a special, highly developed, complex form of the motion of the matter—this was the essence of Engels's scientific outlook on this problem.

He started from the idea that the very emergence of life implied its connection with the preceding lower and simpler forms of motion, the chemical forms of motion. He pointed to the inner connections and continuity in the forms of motion of matter and to the qualitative differences among these forms. He comprehended the organism as a higher unity welding the lower forms of motion of matter into a qualitatively new entity.⁴⁰

"Iron Necessity"

In his approach to the scientific study of the nature and origin of life, Engels emphasized the dialectical understanding of qualitatively different levels of the operation of natural laws and dialectical regularities. The nature of life could not be understood without such an understanding of the evolution and development of matter on earth towards life as a historically developed and advanced form of motion. Life could not really be understood in the absence of an exhaustive investigation of the history of life—"all the forms in which it appears from the lowest to the highest."⁴¹ It was this historical understanding that was immediately required from the scientific standpoint, not a rigid definition of life.⁴²

The idea of historical evolution and development of matter towards life is, in fact, central to the thought of Engels on the question. Life, as a higher form of motion in the eternal evolution of matter, is not separated from the rest of the world by an unbridgeable gap but arises in the process of the development of matter, at a definite stage of this development, as a new and formerly absent quality. Engels even advanced the remarkable idea—considering the state of scientific knowledge of the universe during his time—that the development of matter towards life and the thinking mind could not be unique to the earth. The historical evolution of matter, from lower and simple to higher and more complex forms of motion, implied the "iron necessity"⁴³ that life and the thinking mind were being produced elsewhere in the universe.

Drawing from the data of the most advanced life science of his time, Engels grasped the essence of the new and revolutionary quality of life on earth: "Life is the mode of existence of protein bodies, the essential element of which consists in *continual metabolic interchange with the natural environment outside them*, and which ceases with the cessation of this metabolism, bringing about the decomposition of the protein."⁴⁴

In this characterization of life, Engels identified protein bodies as the material carrier of life and the metabolic exchange of substance as the primary expression of the quality which makes us regard life as a special form of motion of matter.

Engels clearly identified within the process of life the fundamental contradiction made up of two opposite tendencies: the need for organisms to build up living matter and the need to break down and discard living matter. The natural environment outside the living body constituted an essential condition of life. But life must primarily be understood on the basis of its internal contradiction, on the basis of the unity and struggle of the dialectically opposite tendencies. The internal content of the process of development of life consists in the struggle of these opposites.

The formulation that life was the mode of existence of protein bodies did not, of course, mean that protein itself was living matter. It meant that protein had, hidden in its chemical structure, the capacity for further evolution which under certain conditions might lead to the origin of living things.⁴⁵

Material Bearer of Life

Anticipating the great experimental work in biochemistry in the twentieth century, Engels saw chemical investigation into the composition of proteins and experiments to produce protein bodies from inorganic substances as the most important line of scientific research directed towards explaining the origin of life.⁴⁶ His approach to the scientific comprehension of the nature and origin of life united the struggle to establish the biochemical basis of biological processes with the struggle to establish the dialectical materialist concept of the material unity of the world in the natural sciences of the late nineteenth century.

His treatment of the subject contained a warning against the dogma that, decades later, was to impose itself strongly on, and mislead, scientific thought on the origin of life: the dogma that the material bearer of the life of organisms that evolved over a very long period was identical with the material bearer of life in its actual origination on earth.⁴⁷

The co-founder of Marxism emphasized the need to study, on the detailed basis of scientific investigation, experiment and practice, the fundamental condition of existence of the material bearer of life in its origin, evolution and development. For, above all, life could not be understood, either in its nature and origin, or evolution and development, by a mere study of the physical and chemical properties inherent in it :

Life...consists primarily in the fact that every moment it is itself and at the same time something else; and this does not take place as the result of a process to which it is subjected from without, as is the way in which this can occur also in the case of inanimate bodies. On the contrary, life...is a self-implementing process which is inherent in, native to, its bearer...without which the latter cannot exist.⁴⁸

LENIN ON MATTER-LIFE RELATIONSHIP

The outstanding Marxist work of theoretical generalization of the essential achievements of the natural sciences in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century was Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.⁴⁹ The subsequent *Philosophical Notebooks*⁵⁰ took forward the struggle to establish Marxist principles for the philosophical comprehension of the latest achievements in the natural sciences, in opposition to the idealist and mechanistic concepts prevalent among scientists of the time.

Several aspects of Lenin's work on philosophical and scientific criticism related to the questions that scientists investigating the nature of life were grappling with.

First of all, Lenin defended, clarified and elaborated the Marxist standpoint on the relation between dialectical materialism and experimental work in the natural sciences. Natural science, Lenin emphasized, instinctively groped towards materialism, but the natural scientist, if he was to solve the problems he took up in a consistently scientific way, must base his work on solid, philosophical foundations.⁵¹ He must choose between the camp of idealism and the camp of materialism. He must, in a profound philosophical sense, define and clarify his approach to the problem of matter and its development.

Secondly, Lenin defended, clarified and elaborated the dialectical materialist standpoint on matter. It was a period of great advance in physics, when the old laws, the old basic principles, and the old established concepts had broken down and when there appeared a temporary deflection from the materialist standpoint, a temporary deviation towards reactionary philosophy.

Lenin pointed out that the abandoning of old concepts of matter was not new—much less unique—in the history of the development of the natural sciences. In fact, as Engels had explicitly recognized, “with each epoch-making discovery even in the sphere of natural science it (materialism) has to change its form.”⁵² This revision of the ‘form’ of materialism, a revision of old natural-philosophical propositions, was an essential requirement of Marxism.⁵³

The ‘revolution in physics’ compelled the abandoning or modification of many old concepts about matter, its states and behaviour. Many of the old ‘properties’ of matter had now to be defined within specific limits and circumstances. The ‘new physics’ gave the scientific approach

to nature new, hitherto unsuspected, exciting dimensions.

What materialism asserted with finality was this: matter was real, matter was knowable, and the laws of matter were increasingly discoverable. Matter was eternal and the universe infinite, stressed Lenin, but it eternally and infinitely existed.

For what, after all, was matter?

When dialectical materialists referred to matter, all that they meant was that there was an objective reality existing outside man's mind and reflected by it.⁵⁴

The known properties of matter might hold only within certain limits and its forms were open to endless revision by the advance of scientific knowledge. But the great scientific truth that there was nothing in the universe but matter could not be revised. Lenin expressed this with characteristic wit:

The teachings of science on the structure of matter...may and do constantly become obsolete, but the truth that man is unable to subsist on ideas or to beget children by Platonic love alone never becomes obsolete...The artifices of the idealists and the agnostics are, taken as a whole, as hypocritical as the Pharisees' sermons on Platonic love!⁵⁵

Lenin highlighted the process through which natural science dispelled the ignorance and 'mystery' surrounding nature and independently came to the conclusion that Engels had presented in *Dialectics of Nature*, a work unknown to Lenin. The attainment of objective truth was a process that did not boil down to a confrontation between human reason and nature, but implied that man's knowledge of nature increased in the measure that he learned to change it.⁵⁶

Lenin sharply formulated the dialectical materialist standpoint in relation to the natural sciences: "the universal principle of development must be combined, linked, made to correspond with the universal principle of the *unity of the world*, nature, motion, matter etc."⁵⁷

The principle of development could not be applied consistently unless it was united with the principle of the materiality of the world; materialism could not remain materialism unless it included the idea of development.⁵⁸

Lenin took up the question of the relationship between matter and life, matter and man, in the light of the rapidly advancing natural sciences:

Natural science positively asserts that the earth once existed in such a state that no man or any other creature existed or could have existed on it. Organic matter is a later phenomenon, the fruit of a long evolution. It follows that there was no sentient matter, no 'complexes of sensations' no *self* that was supposedly 'indissolubly' connected with the environment...Matter is primary, and thought, consciousness, sensation are products of a very high development.

Such is the materialist theory of knowledge, to which natural science instinctively subscribes.⁵⁰

Lenin emphasized the futility and diversionary character of attempts to 'explain' at the level of speculation

how matter, apparently devoid of sensation, is related to matter which, though composed of the same atoms (or electrons), is yet endowed with a well-defined faculty of sensation. Materialism clearly formulates the as yet unsolved problem and thereby stimulates the attempt to solve it, to undertake further *experimental investigation*. (Emphasis added)⁵¹

Thirdly, Lenin defended and emphasized the dialectical materialist standpoint on objective law in nature and objective causality. The recognition of objective law in nature and the recognition that this law was reflected with approximate fidelity in the mind of men must form the basis of scientific investigation of matter, its forms and its development. Lenin pointed out, citing Engels, that the human conception of cause and effect always simplified the objective conception of the phenomena of nature, reflecting it only approximately, artificially isolating one or another aspect of a single world process.⁵²

He emphasized the need to recognize in nature the necessity previously unknown to man, and the existence of qualitatively distinct realms of the operation of natural law corresponding to the qualitatively distinct forms of motion of matter. We shall see, later on in this article, how crucial this recognition was in arriving at a scientific theory of the nature of life. Viewing life only in terms of physical and chemical laws was to prove a formidable stumbling-block to experimental scientists.

OPARIN'S PIONEERING THESIS

The scientific theory advanced in a rudimentary form in 1924 by Alexander Ivanovich Oparin (1894-) was a brilliant confirmation of the soundness of the scientific principles emphasized by Engels and Lenin. The great breakthrough did come in the field of biochemistry. It was made by a young biochemist working in the first socialist state in the world and armed with the weapon of dialectical materialism. We shall see, later, how the publication of Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* in 1925 helped to liberate Oparin completely from mechanistic ideas about the nature and origin of life and put him on the road of dialectical scientific understanding of the problem.

Oparin's 1924 paper is rightly considered the first and principal modern theory of the origin of life. With this thesis, he transformed the nature of all scientific research that was to follow on the problem.

The crucial nature of the relationship between the philosophical standpoint and the experimental method adopted stands out very clearly in the development of Oparin's theory of the origin of life. A turning point in the development of any scientific theory occurs when

contradictions arise between the existing conceptions and important experimental or practical results. At this point, it is only by adopting a correct method that scientists can advance theory.⁶²

When the contradiction between the existing theoretical concepts and experimental evidence is not basic in character, scientists often resort to a few necessary suppositions with a firm basis. These are then used to 'revise' the existing theory, and the new theory that emerges is verified experimentally and practically and thereby enriched.

When the contradiction that arises is basic in nature, it is necessary to examine the whole content of the existing theories and then to decide the kind of experimentation and practical verification that will provide data to fully reveal the nature of the contradiction. After critically abstracting the rational elements of the older theory, a new theory is developed to conform with the new experimental and practical results.

This is, in essence, the method of scientific advance.

At the time when Oparin was slowly groping towards a dialectical-materialist theory of the origin of life, it was a *basic contradiction* that he was confronted with.

Mechanistic views on the nature and origin of life were widely prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century, but Oparin was clearly influenced by the fact that, apart from Engels and Lenin, the most advanced scientific opinion of the time supported the evolutionary approach to the problem.⁶³ In an address delivered at the University of Warsaw in 1893, V Belyaev, the eminent Russian botanist and cytologist, sketched in general terms the gradual development of matter on the way to the origin of life. E A Schafer, addressing the annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Dundee in 1912, proposed that

living matter must have owed its origin to...a process of gradual evolution...Looking, therefore, at the evolution of living matter by the light which is shed upon it by the study of the evolution of matter in general, we are led to regard it as having been produced... by a gradual process of change from material which was lifeless, through material on the borderland between the inanimate and the animate, to material which has all the characteristics to which we attach the term 'life'.⁶⁴

Such ideas were in the air at a time when mechanistic theories of the origin of life, which had played a progressive role in combating idealism and clericalism, were coming into conflict with the experimental scientific data. All that was irrational in the existing theoretical concepts had to be discarded and a new theory developed. As further experimental advances caused less basic contradictions to appear, Oparin revised his theory.

The evolutionary principle was, then, the leading factor in the theory proposed by Oparin. In his own assessment, the importance of

Darwin's theory was that it applied the principles of evolution to explain the development of higher organisms from lower ones; it thus suggested that it was impossible to conceive of living things coming into being without previous evolutionary development.⁶⁶

Biochemistry, the Basis

The basis of the theory was biochemistry. In 1923, research in modern biology and particularly molecular biology had hardly begun and biochemistry was still in its infancy. However, significant developments had taken place in biochemistry since the turn of the century, including several breakthroughs in the study of fermentation, a process to which Oparin gave much importance in his 1924 thesis.

Modern biochemistry had made its entrance into the world of natural science around 1897, when Eduard Buchner (1860-8917) separated the active fermentation enzyme from yeast cells.⁶⁷ For the first time there was a field of investigation that took up the specialized problems of the chemistry of living organisms. The next three decades were to see intense research leading to the isolation of the first enzyme, urease,⁶⁸ the discovery of the first vitamins,⁶⁹ and the fermentation of citric acid.⁷⁰

In spite of the synthesis of urea by Friedrich Wohler (1800-1882) as early as 1828, there was still a widespread belief that organic matter was produced only by living organisms. Many scientists had analyzed meteorites and found organic matter in them.⁷¹ Wohler himself had in 1857 extracted hydrocarbons from a meteorite that fell in Hungary; other scientists had found hydrocarbons in other meteorites, the best-known of which was the Orgueil meteorite which fell in the south of France on 14 May 1864.⁷² In all these cases, the scientists firmly believed that the hydrocarbons had been formed from living things.

It was the extensive experimental investigation by the Russian chemist, D I Mendeleev (1834-1907) that showed that hydrocarbons and their derivatives could originate inorganically.⁷³ A close study of the experimental work of Mendeleev led Oparin to propose that certain compounds had existed before organisms and had led to their origin. Mendeleev had, in fact, proposed the development of petroleum starting from metal carbides. He had suggested that the metal carbides reacted with steam at high temperatures to yield methane, which in turn underwent further transformations to finally yield petroleum.⁷⁴ Oparin could not accept this hypothesis: but it did encourage him to look for an inorganic origin for organic compounds.

As for the environmental conditions needed for molecular evolution to begin, Oparin was influenced by the theory that the earth originated in an envelope of incandescent gas. "Only in fire, only in incandescent heat could the substances which later gave rise to life have formed."⁷⁵ By 1936, when his first book came out, Oparin had brought this in line with the theory of James Jeans (1877-1946) which hypothesized

a star approaching the sun causing a tidal wave of incandescent solar atmosphere to be pulled out by gravity.⁷⁶ This incandescent mass later condensed into planets. Later astronomers rejected this theory on the ground that it was based on highly exceptional circumstances. Oparin, too, abandoned it.

If the principle of evolution was the leading factor and the data thrown up by biochemical experimentation the basis of Oparin's theory, the scientific environment of the USSR was a decisive aid and encouragement. The influence of a rising and confident Soviet science stands out sharply, especially when one compares Oparin's situation with that of the progressive scientist, J B S Haldane (1892-1964) in England. In the USSR, where dialectical and historical materialism was the world outlook, philosophy and weapon of the class which held state power, Oparin's theory was hailed and welcomed enthusiastically. The Soviet state and people expected their scientific workers to provide materialist answers to age-old problems such as the origin of life. In England, however, Haldane's materialist hypothesis on the origin of life, advanced in 1929, was dismissed as "wild speculation."⁷⁸ Haldane considered it tactful to compromise what he had so boldly theorized with the statement that his hypothesis was compatible with "the view that pre-existent mind or spirit can associate itself with certain kinds of matter."⁷⁷ Haldane evidently had no personal belief in this view; he made the compromise because he feared that "some people will consider it a sufficient refutation of the above theories to say that they are materialistic."⁷⁸

Essential Components

We shall now look at the essential components of Oparin's new theory. The young Soviet scientist took up the question of whether organisms could be considered formations that were entirely and essentially different from the rest of the world. Had life so little in common with non-living matter that it could not have arisen from it?⁷⁹

Oparin noted that experimental scientific work had found a close relationship in the chemical composition of the substances which made up animate and inanimate matter. Carbon was found to exist in all living matter; it was found also in non-living matter. Organic compounds, so closely associated with organisms, were found to exist in inanimate matter and some had even been synthesized in the laboratory.

Taking up the question whether the special qualitative traits that existed in living bodies were unique to life, Oparin scrutinized each of the characteristics that were considered so. He found that none of them could, in the light of the latest scientific knowledge, be considered unique to life:

1 'Organisms have a definite structure': The structure was not primarily an external one, but a very fine internal organization. There were still scientists who held that such a structure could not have been

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formed out of structureless matter without some divine or spiritual intervention. But scientific knowledge showed that the existence of definite structures was not unique to the living world, and that inanimate matter did not lack definite forms. In fact, it was a property of most chemical substances that they could form crystals. The particles of a crystal were all arranged according to a certain plan which depended on the composition and conditions under which they separated out of a solution. In the solution, the particles had no order: but once they formed crystals, the chaos gave way to a strict order. Coagulates or gels obtained by precipitating colloids appeared structureless, but scientists had designed very effective instruments which revealed the complicated structure of coagulates, strikingly reminiscent of the structure of protoplasm.

2 'Organisms have the ability to metabolize': By metabolism was meant the ability to absorb substances from the environment, assimilate them, break them down, and to discard waste products. Metabolism was the double process of assimilation and dissimilation. Assimilation was the absorption and utilization by the cell of various substances from the environment together with potential energy of these substances, and the build-up and replacement of disintegrated cell compounds. Dissimilation was the breaking down of the constituents of an organism either by way of oxidation or by decomposition in the absence of oxygen. To put it simply, organisms required nutrition to maintain themselves and develop.

But here too, similar processes could be found in the inanimate world, for example in the case of crystals and colloidal coagulates. A crystal of common salt immersed in a supersaturated solution of the same substance increased its size and grew by absorbing individual particles of substance from its environment and making them a part of its body. Coagulates had the ability to draw substances from the environment deep into their bodies. It was a process similar to the process of assimilation in metabolism.

An even closer similarity to metabolism in the inanimate world could be found in the manner in which spongy platinum decomposed hydrogen peroxide. When spongy platinum was immersed in a hydrogen peroxide solution, the hydrogen peroxide was absorbed on the metal surface forming the hydrate of platinum peroxide. The hydrate then decomposed into water, hydrogen and oxygen returning to their previous form, spongy platinum. As in metabolism, a process of assimilation and dissimilation occurred. Thus, metabolism, considered to be a series of chemical reactions leading to the assimilation and dissimilation of matter, could not be held to be unique to living matter.

3 'Living organisms reproduce themselves': The capacity for self-reproduction, so important to life, was not, however, a trait unique to it. An elementary organism reproduced itself by dividing into two halves, each of which grew to form a cell that was, in every respect, like

the mother cell. But among inanimate things, this property was most commonly found in the crystal. If a crystal of alum was broken into two and both pieces were immersed in a supersaturated solution of alum, it was found that soon the broken edges were replaced from the alum in the solution. The crystal then grew to a form with a structure exactly like the original crystal.

4 'Organisms respond to stimuli': If any organism was subjected to a stimulus, it would respond by some release of energy, for example, by moving. The energy that was expended in responding was usually well in excess of the energy of the stimulus. If this trait was to be considered unique to living things, then a locomotive with its steam up would have to be considered a living thing. All that was required was a slight stimulus to shift the lever, and an enormous amount of work was produced at the expense of its fuel.

Thus Oparin found "no reason to think of life as being something which is completely different in principle from the rest of the world."⁸⁰ There was no impassable wall between the living and the non-living, for life had arisen bodily from the rest of the world.

The specific peculiarity of living organisms is only that in them, there have been collected and integrated an extremely complicated combination of a large number of properties and characteristics which are present in isolation in various dead, inorganic bodies. Life is not characterized by any special properties but by a definite, specific combination of these properties.⁸¹

To discover the conditions which gave rise to this "conjunction of properties which were formerly disjoined,"⁸² Oparin wrote in 1924, was to discover the origin of life.

Story of Life's Origin

Oparin modestly described the story of the origin of life he presented to the world in 1924 as "one of the possible."⁸³

The earth once existed in the form of an enormous cloud of incandescent gas. The atoms that were in a state of great chaos started in a slow and circuitous way to establish an order among themselves. The heavier atoms fell under the influence of gravity to the centre. The lighter ones stayed at the surface and separated roughly into layers.

As the cloud cooled, the material went over from the gaseous to the liquid to the solid state, surrounded by an envelope of lighter elements. As the earth cooled, it lost its incandescence, becoming dimmer and dimmer and finally becoming a 'dark' planet. The first compounds formed were the ones that could be most stable at these temperatures, the carbides. On further cooling, other compounds came into being, forming a thick crust on the surface.

As the crust cooled and shrank, the carbides, gushing out of the earth's core through cracks in the crust, came into contact with the

abundant superheated water vapour in the atmosphere and formed the first hydrocarbons. Some of these were oxidized fully by heat and some only partially. The more reactive hydrocarbons reacted further to give a wide range of hydrocarbons. Apart from these, nitrogen formed ammonia and compounds with carbon.

The earth now entered a stage where it had cooled enough for water to exist as a liquid. The surface of the earth was flooded with a continuous downpour as the water in the atmosphere fell to the earth, giving shape to a boiling ocean. This downpour carried with it all the soluble compounds of the atmosphere. Many of these highly reactive compounds continued to react with each other when they fell into the primeval oceans. They polymerized and formed more complex compounds, aggregated and formed larger particles.

The large molecules that developed formed a colloidal solution in the water. Once a colloidal solution came into existence, it continued to exist and the molecules grew. The state of a colloidal solution is very unstable and sometimes, for very slight disturbances, coagulant bodies will separate out of it. In the vast primeval oceans, with so much organic material, coagulant bits were formed at some time. The formation of the first coagulum was an extremely important point in the process of the evolution of life. For the first time, structureless matter took on a structure. For the first time, there arose a body that could be termed an individual. It could set itself apart from its surroundings and, in a crude way, nourish itself. The first piece of organic slime that came into being on earth could, Oparin believed with some reservations, be considered the first organism.

Each of the bits of coagulant that appeared did not have an identical structure. They grew by assimilating nutrient material from the oceans they were in and they assimilated at different rates. The ones with a better physical and chemical organization and fitness grew faster, while the others lagged behind. As individual bits grew larger, they reached sizes at which they broke into smaller bits. The smaller bits, which had already acquired the changes in the structure of their parents, grew further and they underwent changes in their own structure. The organization of the structures gradually improved to assimilate and absorb nutrition. The bits that could not keep up with the better-organized ones finally stopped growing. Finally, the coagula must have acquired properties quite absent from the original coagula, especially the property to metabolize.

The ability to acquire energy was among the important properties that the better-organized coagulant bits acquired in order to grow and develop. This emerged in the form of respiration or fermentation. As the amount of nutritional matter in the oceans became exhausted, a desperate struggle among the coagulant bits took place for sheer survival. 'Natural selection' became increasingly strict.

Once all the organic matter that had served as nutrition disappeared, the only drops that could evolve further were the ones that could either eat up the weaker ones for nutrition, or those that created within themselves a mechanism to nourish themselves on simple inorganic food. These developed into the organisms that now exist.

Haldane's Contribution

The story that Oparin proposed provided the rudiments of a scientific theory of the origin of life. A very valuable contribution to the authenticity of this story came from England. In 1929, Haldane, working independently of Oparin, published a paper in the *Rationalist Annual*, in which he put forward his view on the origin of life on earth.⁸⁴ His story, though less detailed than Oparin's, does bear basic similarities to it.

Haldane differed from Oparin in placing great importance on the role played by ultra-violet radiation from the sun (particularly with respect to the process of 'selection'). Reacting on a primeval atmosphere containing carbon dioxide, water and ammonia, the ultra-violet light would have formed a large number of organic compounds. These organic compounds dissolved in the primitive oceans until they reached the consistency of 'hot dilute soup'. Haldane hypothesized that it was in this 'primeval soup' that life originated.

A most significant conclusion that Haldane reached—of which Oparin was to be convinced within a few years—was that the primeval atmosphere contained little or no oxygen. The precursors of life must have obtained the energy they required by a process other than oxidation, namely fermentation.

Although Haldane unhesitatingly acknowledged Oparin as the pioneer of scientific studies of the origin of life,⁸⁵ and although Oparin's influence has undoubtedly dominated research in the field, the British scientist deserves to be recognized as a co-originator of the modern scientific theory of the origin of life.⁸⁶

Oparin's thesis, wrote J D Bernal, contains in itself the germs of a new programme in chemical and biological research. It was a programme that he largely carried out himself in the ensuing years, but it also inspired the work of many other people...Oparin's programme does not answer all the questions, in fact, he hardly answers any, but the questions he asks are very effective and pregnant ones and have given rise to an enormous amount of research in the four decades since it was written. The essential thing in the first place is not to solve the problems, but to see them. This is true of the greatest of scientists.⁸⁷

His ideas were based on the most advanced scientific work of the period, although it could not be said that scientific experimentation and practice had conclusively shown that "the process under discussion took place in just this way and not somehow else."⁸⁸

It is important to note that young Oparin was still in the process of becoming a consistent dialectical-materialist. He was not entirely free from the grip of mechanistic materialism, so influential at that time. Soon afterwards, he was to reject the idea that the study of the origin of life was simply the study of how a specific, complex combination of physical-chemical properties found in inorganic matter came about to yield life. In fact, if the hypothesis had remained at this level, it would not have represented a great advance on the views of Haeckel and Pflüger.

What Oparin did establish conclusively was that it was only possible to understand life by studying its history—the evolution of matter towards life. It was a study of how relatively simple forms of motion of matter, governed by physical and chemical laws, gave way to more complex forms of motion, governed by a process of 'selection', an embryonic biological law, and then made the leap to life. To attempt to understand any stage of this process in isolation from its evolution was unscientific.

Oparin's thesis has undergone important changes, shifts in emphasis, corrections and development. But as the pioneer himself noted at a seminar organized in Moscow in 1974 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of his original thesis:

The basic assumption on which I proceeded in 1924, and according to which organic substances that serve for the formation of organisms arose abiotically before the appearance of life on earth is now not only generally accepted, but has received a new dimension... Looking back, I experience a feeling of great satisfaction that the ideas I put forward 50 years ago have withstood the test of time.⁸⁹

(To be continued)

¹ In India it took the form of a struggle between ancient *lokyata*, or the doctrine that the material world is primary, and *upanishadic* idealism of various shades; between the legendary philosophy of the *asuras*, or demons, and the legendary philosophy of the *devas*, or gods; between the original *Sankya* doctrine of *svabhava-vada*, or the doctrine of *svabhava* or nature as the cause of everything, and the *vedantic* doctrine of *brahma-vada*, or the doctrine of the *brahman*, or spirit or consciousness, as the cause of everything; between *acetana-karana-vada*, the doctrine of unconscious matter being the first cause, and *cetana-karana-vada*, the doctrine of the spirit or consciousness being the first cause. The *lokyatic* affirmation that the pre-conscious materialist elements constituting the human body caused consciousness to emerge when combined in a particular way to form the human body—even as known to us in the form of *purvapaksa*, or representation for the purpose of ridicule and refutation by the opponent—constitutes a remarkable attempt to establish the primacy of matter over spirit at a stage in social history when scientific data on the subject was primitive, or almost completely non-existent. For a useful discussion of the essential controversy between materialism and idealism in ancient Indian philosophy, see Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Philosophy: A Popular Introduction*, People's Publishing House (PPH), New Delhi, Third Revised Edition, 1975; *Lokayata: A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism*, PPH, New Delhi, Third Edition, 1973; and *What is Living and What is Dead in Indian Philosophy*, PPH, New Delhi, 1976, especially pp 10-19, 377-400 and

421-494. See also *A Concise History of Science in India*, D M Bose, S N Sen and B V Subbarayappa, (eds.) Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1971, especially pp 31-32, 58-135 and 445-483.

For a reconstruction of the struggle between the two camps in philosophy in ancient and pre-modern China, see volume 2 of Joseph Needham's monumental study, *Science and Civilisation in China*, especially section 13, "The Fundamental Ideas of Chinese Science." Needham surveys proto-materialist and materialist philosophical conceptions and their struggle against idealism, as well as the relationship between these philosophical conceptions and scientific knowledge and practice. There is, of course, no comparable work seeking to relate philosophical development with the origin and development of science in India. See also the article, "The Materialistic Theory of *Yuan Ch'i*—One of the Brilliant Philosophical Ideas of the Legalist School," by Ho Tso-Hsiu of the Institute of High Energy Physics, Academia Sinica, published in *Scientia Sinica* volume XVIII, number 6, November-December 1975, Peking. Here the author shows that the theory of *yuan ch'i* (primordial matter) developed by the native materialists of China is "an outstanding contribution to the materialist outlook on nature" (p 709) and "far surpasses the level of 'atomism' attained by the ancient Greek philosophers in universal motion as a whole and in some details." (p 712).

² F Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1969, p 374.

³ For a detailed account of the various theories of spontaneous generation, see A I Oparin, *The Origin of Life on Earth*, chapter I, Oliver and Boyd, London, 1957. For a briefer account, C Ponnampuruma, *Origins of Life*, Thames and Hudson, London 1972, pp 13-21.

⁴ Oparin, op cit., p 44.

⁵ For the views of Harvey, Bacon and Descartes, see Oparin, op. cit., pp 16-17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., pp 17-19.

⁸ For a detailed account, ibid., pp 28-38.

⁹ Sidney W Fox, *Molecular Evolution and the Origin of Life*, W H Freeman & Co., San Francisco, p 3.

¹⁰ P Vallery-Radot (ed.), *Oeuvres de Pasteur*, vol 2, Masson et Cie, Paris 1922, cited in Fox, op. cit., p 4.

¹¹ A Ilyin and I Frolov, "Scientific Quest and Philosophical Struggle in Biology", *Social Sciences*, USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, no 3, 1974, p 94.

¹² K Marx, letter to F Lassalle dated 16 January 1861 in Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1965, p 123; F Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1970, p 53; also see M Nesturkh, "Anthropogenesis before Darwin", *The Origin of Man*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1959, p 14.

¹³ From a letter dated 1871, cited by Oparin, op cit., p 79.

¹⁴ For a detailed account, ibid., pp 57-69.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp 32-33.

¹⁶ Ilyin and Frolov, op.cit., pp 113-114.

¹⁷ Oparin op. cit., pp 45-69.

¹⁸ The discussion of the contribution of progressive scientists is from Oparin, op cit.: chapter III, "Attempts at a Scientific Approach to the Problem of the Origin of Life" pp 93-105.

¹⁹ Ibid., p 77.

²⁰ Ibid., pp 82-84.

²¹ Ibid., pp 84-86.

²² Ibid., p 90.

²³ C H Weddington, the distinguished British geneticist, acknowledged this openly "Future students of the history of ideas are likely to take note that this new view, which amounts to nothing less than a great revolution in man's philosophical outlook

- on his own position in the natural world, was first developed by Communists." ("That's Life," *New York Review of Books*, 29 February 1968, p 19).
- 21 Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, op cit., p 36.
- 22 Ibid., p 33.
- 23 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1966, p 69.
- 24 Engels, Preface to the second edition of *Anti-Duhring*, op. cit., pp 16-17.
- 25 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, op. cit., pp 243-256.
- 26 Ibid., p 249.
- 27 Ibid., p 69.
- 28 Ibid., p 29.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p 30.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., pp 30, 199, 253 and 296-303.
- 33 Ibid., p 297
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Oparin, op. cit., pp 76 and 87.
- 36 Ibid., pp 84 and 92.
- 37 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, op. cit., 250 and 282-283.
- 38 Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, op. cit., p 101.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, op. cit., p 39.
- 41 Ibid., p 301.
- 42 Oparin, op cit., pp 230-231 and 348-349.
- 43 Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, op. cit., pp 198-199.
- 44 Ibid., pp 301-302.
- 45 Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, op. cit., p 101.
- 46 V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol 14, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1968.
- 47 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol 38.
- 48 Lenin, "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism" *Collected Works* vol 14, p 306 and 313.
- 49 Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Progress Publishers Moscow 1969, p 23, quoted by Lenin, op cit., p 251.
- 50 Lenin, op. cit., p 251.
- 51 Ibid., pp 103-104.
- 52 Ibid., p 185.
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FRANCOIS HOUTART

Buddhism and Politics in South-east Asia

PART TWO

IN THE Buddhist countries of south and south-east Asia, with a single exception, independence did not transform existing fundamental structures. In Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam, westernized elites came into power. In Thailand the uninterrupted continuity was assured. The transfer of power which followed the Second World War accelerated a series of social changes like the introduction of a 'welfare state' in Sri Lanka. Only North Vietnam made a clean break with the past, charting out a completely different pattern for its polity and economy.

During the postwar period there was a marked increase in economic dependence on western capitalism in consonance with its powerful trend toward heavy monopolistic concentration. The war in Vietnam impinged oppressively on the Indochinese nations, and on Thailand as a consequence of the American military bases there. That all these nations commanded no real mastery of their economies and only an elite was profiting from the dependent economic system, was fraught with political impulses. In Sri Lanka it led to the youth insurgency of 1971. In Burma was precipitated the economic autarchy that the Ne Win regime tried to establish, without, it seems, much improvement of general welfare. Thailand showed a high degree of vulnerability to the

economic and political problems of the west, so that when the effects of the crisis were combined with the end of the war in Vietnam, the country found itself in a sea of troubles. The Indochinese peninsula witnessed a long and cruel war in which a major capitalist power intervened against local socialist forces supported by the communist countries. This is, in brief, the general background for a study of the relationships between Buddhism and politics in the last three decades of decolonialization.

In making a typology, distinction should be made between the Theravada and the Mahayana traditions. In the Theravada group we find three situations: i) In the kingdoms of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, Buddhism and the state formed the Establishment. (Monarchy has now been abolished in Cambodia and Laos); ii) when ministers tried to act like kings, as it happened twice in Burma (Ba Maw during the Japanese occupation and U Nu later on) moves were afoot to make Buddhism the state religion; iii) in the absence of any attempt to create a monarchical regime, even a constitutional one at that, there was clear separation between religion and the state. This was the characteristic of Sri Lanka and of Burma under Aung San soon after the war and Ne Win since 1963. In Vietnam, of Mahayana tradition, the question never arose except in the midst of the 1963 crisis when one of the leading Buddhist monks, Thrich Tri Quang, asked for recognition of Buddhism as state religion, in protest against a Catholic President, Diem.⁸² A brief review is made in this article of the efforts for restoring Buddhism as the state religion, the cases of separation of Buddhism from the state, and the conflicts with the Catholic minority.

Moves aimed at Restoration

In a country like Burma, where the colonial power had suppressed the monarchy, there was no king to preside over the restoration of Buddhism. Ba Maw tried it under Japanese sponsorship. Soon after the war, in 1947, a committee was formed with the declared objective of making Buddhism the state religion.⁸³ In 1959 it assumed the proportions of a national organization drawing inspiration from the example of King Thibaw (1878-1885).⁸⁴ This was just before the elections, when U Nu was advancing the religious arguments in his campaign. When he came to power for the second time, he declared Buddhism as official state religion. Even as early as 1951, U Nu had started preparing the ground, and at the convocation of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council in 1954 he launched the programme for religious revival in a bid to make Burma the centre of the Buddhist world.⁸⁵ In 1956, the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's birth was celebrated with ceremonies all over the country. U Nu took several measures for putting the sangha on a sound financial footing and for instruction of the monks in the Pali texts. Financial assistance was given to the sangha to reconstruct and maintain pagodas and build hospitals. In addition to convening meetings of the Buddhist

associations, a public administration system for religious affairs was also set up.

Several lay organizations supported U Nu's policy which was hailed as anti-communist. Among them was the YMBA, which was receiving financial support from the Asia Foundation based in the USA. In 1961 U Nu proclaimed Buddhism as the state religion of Burma calling a synod for the reform of the *sasana* and declaring public religious holidays, but without denying religious liberty to non-Buddhists. Freedom of religion provoked a strong reaction from the most traditionalist Buddhist monks. U Nu proposed the construction of 60,000 pagodas all over the country. It was reminiscent of the reign of Asoka, the archetype of a Buddhist ruler. U Nu went one step further, by declaring himself a *bodisattva* or a future Buddha.⁸⁶ It was too much for a section of the public and many politicians in particular to swallow. In the *coup d'etat* of March 1963 Ne Win turned the country back to secularism.

In the Kingdoms

In Cambodia the post-1946 constitution stipulated Buddhism as official state religion. The chief monks of the *nikayas* were to be appointed by the king. Sihanouk who had been a monk in the *Dhammayuttika* *nikaya* reinforced the links between Buddhism and the crown. He was the temporal head of the *sangha* which accorded him religious legitimacy.⁸⁷ He led a religious renewal, helped to build the Wat Preah temple, integrated the two *nikayas* and appointed two *sangharajas*. When, as chief of government, Sihanouk launched Khmer Socialism, he declared that it was to apply "the principles of Buddhism".⁸⁸ The union between religion and state ended with Sihanouk's abdication as head of state.

In Laos the picture was similar. In 1945 Buddhism was once again officially declared to be under the protection of the king. In 1951 new regulations were promulgated for the reorganization of the *sangha* under which education and ordination of the monks came to be supervised by the Ministry of Religion. The *sangharaja* was to be elected by the chiefs of the monasteries of the various provinces from a list drawn up by the Ministry, the director of which kept a close watch on the affairs of the *sangha*.⁸⁹ In 1959 fresh regulations came into force for the organization of the *sangha* in the provinces.

During the difficult political situation of the 1960s, Buddhism continued to play its part, although passively, because the three political forces (pro-communist, rightist and neutralist) were trying to maintain good relations with the *sangha*. Under the coalition governments, the Ministry of Religion was in the hands of the neutralist prince, Souvanna Phouma. However the Pathet Lao, which declared that it was not against religion, enlisted the sympathy of the younger monks. Prince

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of Ba Maw, Aung San declared the religious neutrality of the Union of Burma.⁹⁴ Under the present regime of General Ne Win religious liberty exists and historical temples are well kept by the state. No privileges are accorded anymore to the sangha in whose internal affairs the state has adopted a policy of non-interference since 1963, even in the face of opposition from groups of monks.

In Vietnam the situation has been different. Buddhism was never a state religion, although quite popular when the rulers were Confucian. Theravada Buddhism existed only among the Khmer minority, but without much influence on the national scene. The Buddhist renewal had no direct political overtones, at least at the beginning. In North Vietnam the policy was clear since 1946: total separation between state and religion. Certain privileges were given to religious institutions and personnel, not exclusively Buddhist, like land for the upkeep of pagodas and churches, and exemption from military service for monks and priests. In South Vietnam the establishment of the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic, marked the beginning of a series of incidents of a religious character.

Conflicts with Catholic Minority

The political base of the Diem regime was the Catholic minority more particularly the Catholic refugees from the north who came after 1954. Diem's repression of the Coa-Dai and Hao-Hoa sects, Buddhist groups and even monasteries accused of being too pacific or even pro-communist, led to a Buddhist opposition. In 1963 the prohibition against flying the Buddhist flag in Hue, linked with the celebration of the jubilee of the Catholic archbishop, the president's brother, provoked demonstrations in which several people were killed by the police. The tension mounted when monks burned themselves as a sign of protest in the Mahayana tradition. In the police attack on the Xa Loi pagoda in Saigon, a number of monks lost their lives.

Not only was there separation between Buddhism and the state, but real hostility. The city of Hue became a centre of the revival. In the following years it was directed against General Ky, a Buddhist, because of his war policy, and against President Thieu, a Catholic, who started relying on the Catholic minority as a power base for his regime. Among Buddhists a pacifist attitude manifested itself against the war. After the Paris agreements they constituted the major part of the so-called 'Third Component' which never had an occasion to express itself politically. With Vietnam's reunification, Buddhism is completely separated from politics.

The end of the colonial period brought, in two countries, a wide rift between the Catholic minority and the Buddhist majority. Sometimes represented as persecution of the Christians, its political origin is not hard to trace. In Sri Lanka at independence a good number of the

influential personalities of the westernized class which came into power were Christians, Catholics for the most part and Anglicans and other protestants. They represented a real political and social power, with large numbers, if not majorities, in parliament, the army, the university and the mass media, while forming only nine percent of the total population. It is quite natural that the Buddhist majority felt the abnormality of such a situation especially when Buddhism became an important element of the nation-building process.

One of the main channels of "Christian power" were the schools. Nationalization of education became symbolic in that it meant the abolition of the minority influence. Religious issues were raised by only some of the leaders, especially on the Catholic side.⁹⁶ The ban on foreign missionaries was linked to nationalism and to the reaction against the western powers, with whom Christian missionaries had been, willingly or not, associated. Burma after 1965 tells the same story.

The other major conflict has been in South Vietnam where Catholics represented 10 per cent of the population. More political than religious, the tension continued till the end of the war. It is worth noting that those conflicts did not arise in countries where Buddhism had been declared a state religion, but where separation was an established policy. Secularization of the state coincided with major Christian penetration as in Sri Lanka while in most other countries like Cambodia, Laos or Thailand, the continuation of the Buddhist legitimacy of political power did not help the advance of foreign religions. Burma was an intermediary case and Vietnam never had a state religion integrating the whole population. It helped the formation of an important Catholic minority which exercised in the south a political influence out of proportion with its numerical strength.

Political Role of the Sangha in Burma

Traditionally in the Theravada countries the sangha and the Buddhist monks kept out of political affairs. One exception, and a minor one at that, had been Burma. Even during the colonial period the nationalist movements and the Buddhist renewal were mostly the work of lay people. In the 1920s, an intervention of monks was severely condemned by the thathanabaing. (In Vietnam, a Mahayana country, the traditional opposition between the popular groups and the Confucian rulers made straight the path of political participation of the monks.)

After independence of the colonial countries and in Thailand right after the abolition of the military regime in 1974, the monks started taking part in politics. In Burma in 1951 at the time of the first U Nu government, 3000 monks occupied the offices of the Ministry of Religion, in protest against the sasana reform.⁹⁷ Earlier in 1947 when it was decided to deprive the monks of voting rights, the Young Sangha Associations had registered strong protest.⁹⁸ In 1959 U Nu prepared for his election

campaign on the main plank of re-establishing Buddhism as the official state religion. He used the authority of the sangha to promote the idea and also to introduce anti-communism as a major ideological weapon by reviving the *Dhammantaraya* (Danger for the Dharma) Movement.⁹⁹ In 1960 the Union Sangha League was organized to support U Nu and his party in the election campaign. At the same time another group was founded to fight communism, called the All Burma Young Monks' Association.¹⁰⁰

After the declaration of Buddhism as state religion in 1961, 2000 monks demonstrated before parliament against granting religious liberty to other religions. A few months later, 1500 monks were demonstrating against state aid for the construction of a mosque in a Rangoon suburb, Okkalapa.¹⁰¹ Finally when Ne win came to power and re-established the secular character of the state, numerous protests arose from the Buddhist monks. One of the demonstrations is said to have rallied about 10,000 of them. A prominent leader was an old monk of Mandalay, U Kethaya.¹⁰² In 1964, a conflict arose between the government and the Young Monks' Association.¹⁰³ Such conflicts persisted for quite a long time.¹⁰⁴ However it now seems that the political influence of the sangha has been practically eliminated.

Ceylon Bikkhus on the Move

In Sri Lanka, the intervention of the bikkhus began in 1947 when the Ceylon Union of Bikkhus reacted against the Soulbury constitution and demanded complete independence. This movement also indicated some orientation to a socioeconomic programme: nationalization of the mines, tea estates, transportation; control of foreign investment; free education and prohibition.¹⁰⁵ In 1952, on the eve of the election, when Solomon Bandaranaike presented his new party, the SLFP, the *maha nayakas* (chief monks) of the two main nikayas, Malwatta (temple of the tooth) and Asgiri, gave their indirect support to the conservative party, the UNP, in spite of the fact that the SLFP was in favour of Buddhism. The fear of communism inhibited political support, because an alliance with Marxists was envisaged by Bandaranaike.

It was in 1956 that the political involvement of bikkhus became more pronounced. The Eksath Bikkhu Peranuma was constituted before the elections to support the SLFP. Younger monks were particularly active, not quite to the liking of the *maha nayakas* of various branches of the sangha.¹⁰⁶ In 1952, the year of the 2500th anniversary of Buddhism, 250 monks organized a sit-in before the parliament building to protest against holding elections on the eve of Buddha *jayanti*. The same year a group of bikkhus protested against the Chinese annexation of Tibet. The assassination of Bandaranaike by a Buddhist monk in 1959 caused a serious setback to the political activities of the monks whose image sank low in the eyes of the public. In 1963 bikkhus were again

demonstrating in Ceylon, this time against the Diem regime in Vietnam. In the insurgency of the youth in 1971, young bikkhus took part although the sangha was very much opposed to it. Sirimavo Bandaranaike asked the sangha to reinforce its influence on youth in order to forestall such events.¹⁰⁷

In Thailand, Marshal Sarit Thanarat was concerned in 1960 about the possible influence of communism among Buddhist monks some of whom were invited to China.¹⁰⁸ In 1962 political circles considered it dangerous for the regime to train monks in the political sciences at the university and several of them were sent down. It was in 1964 that the monks began to be associated with programmes of development¹⁰⁹ initiated by the government especially as a strategy to combat communism and "to create loyalty to the nation."¹¹⁰ Till 1973 although there was no involvement of monks in politics, the authorities were not reluctant to make use of them wherever possible.

Monks in Recent Thai Events

Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn left the government in the face of demonstrations of workers and students in 1973. A new constitution was hammered out and elections were announced for 1975. This was the beginning of a new situation marked by massive intervention of the monks in politics. The end of the war in Vietnam and the beginning of the economic crisis produced repercussions among various strata of society: Workers revolted against the exploitation of foreign companies; peasants against loss of land brought on by the accumulating burden of debt, students and intellectuals against military dictatorship. The monks reacted to the cumulative effect of several problems; the utilization of the sangha by those in power; the very severe government control on its internal affairs; the fundamental question of the encounter between Buddhism and the new values introduced by industrialization; and American economic and military domination. A new class emerged rapidly from this process, located in Bangkok and challenging quite a few of the traditional, including religious, values. The brutal introduction into the ideological system of the capitalist mode of production raised among some of the monks intellectual questions having their origin in the tremendous development of scientific knowledge in the modern world. Many of them became increasingly aware of the social problems of peasants and workers.

Three important events took place. First came a conference of monks on the theme "Buddhism must be reformed". It was intended to highlight the deviations of the sangha. The speakers denounced the involvement of Thailand, a Buddhist country, with the US in Vietnam and also the social miseries in towns and villages. They alluded to the lack of true Buddhist spirit in the sangha and to the unseemly rivalry among monks for ostentatious functions. The use of Buddhism in the

anti-communist campaign was deplored while solidarity between the monks and the people was stressed.

The second event was the participation of monks in a peasant demonstration in Bangkok. About 40 of them were present and their act of solidarity was approved by more than 2000. As the council of the sangha had forbidden the participation of the monks, several were expelled from the monasteries. They were happily received by the peasants in the villages. The main arguments of the monks for their participation was solidarity with the people and their protest at the chief monks who had endorsed the military dictatorship and even blessed the troops and planes going to kill the Vietnamese.

The third event was the hunger strike organized by five monks, of whom one was a university professor, for the rehabilitation of two of their fellow monks expelled from the sangha 14 years ago accused of violating monastic rules and sympathizing with Communism, but who in fact were popular at the time of the nomination of a new supreme patriarch. The hunger strikers called for the return to a more democratic system of government in the sangha. Thousands of monks gathered to hear the arguments. This massive intervention of monks was something new in Thailand. It dealt a profound cultural shock in the population and it is difficult to foresee what will be the consequences in the long run.

In 1976 preparations for new elections brought disturbance and violence in their wake. A religious movement had been founded, the Nawapon, by Watana Keovimal, in opposition to the leftist tendencies of many monks. This movement created a political party, the Dhammat Patai, essentially anti-communist and supported by the military circles. Using the religious arguments and operating often from the monasteries, its use of fascist methods and violence did not go unnoticed in the international press. A political polarization was thus taking place inside the sangha.

Indochina Retreat

Coming back to the three Indochinese countries passing through dramatic events because of the war, the Khmer Issarak (liberation movement against the French) in Cambodia in 1947 included 32 Buddhist monks on its Central Committee. Between 1951 and 1953, there were several demonstrations of Buddhist monks of leftist and rightist orientation. The rightists were supported by American organizations.¹¹² In 1963, monks demonstrated in front of the Vietnamese consulate in Phnom Penh.¹¹³ In 1973, demonstrations were staged against the Lon Nol government. The establishment of the regime of the Khmer Rouge will probably mark the end of sangha involvement in Cambodian politics.

In Laos a similar pattern is noticeable. In 1961 was organized the Maha Buddha Vongsā with leftist tendencies.¹¹⁴ At the end of the 50s,

the majority of the monks were opposed to the growing American influence and when the Neo Lao Haksat was founded, Buddhist religious groups were represented on it.¹¹⁵ In 1960, the sangha reacted against the attempts of control by the government which accused it of being pro-communist.¹¹⁶ Several monks participated in an anti-American demonstration. The rift continued until the 1976 takeover by the Pathet Lao. It is quite probable that from now on the monks will not be allowed to intervene in public affairs.

In Vietnam, Buddhist monks have been politically active, but not so openly before the clashes with the Diem regime in 1963. In 1952, the Venerable Thich Tri Quang founded the Buddha Sangha Association of Vietnam, a religious organization which later on became also a political platform for the monks.¹¹⁷ In North Vietnam, the Venerable Thich Tri Do, his brother, headed in 1954 the Buddhist Association of Vietnam, which united all Buddhist associations and established links with the government.¹¹⁸ In 1963, arose the conflict with President Diem. The Buddhist National Liberation Front was founded as an anti-government non-communist force in which many monks were involved. In 1964 several of them held a hunger strike demanding free elections and since then demonstrations and protests followed regularly. The elections declared by President Thieu were boycotted by the Buddhist monks and in 1974 followed more self-immolations by monks in public. The hope of the Buddhists to constitute the third force between the Thieu government and the revolutionary forces did not materialize, mostly because Thieu would not allow them to play any such role. With the fall of his regime and the reunification of Vietnam as a socialist republic, political involvement of the monks must be reckoned to have come to an end.

End of an Epoch

We shall now turn to the politicalization of the sangha and the explosion which followed in practically all the countries under review. It was no specific problem of the sangha itself, but a reaction to the profound political and cultural crisis. The sangha manifested its involvement in various ways. There was, among certain monks, the desire for full restoration of Buddhism through recognition as state religion linked generally with the monarchies. For such monks the feudal setup was the only acceptable model in which king and sangha supported each other. Another group, much more important, felt that one fruit of independence should be privileges and prerogatives for Buddhism and particularly the sangha. They expected and asked for aid of a secular state for the material needs and cultural activities of the sangha. Some of the more forceful interventions of the monks were linked with the defence of Buddhism and the rights of the sangha against undue state control and, a relatively new trend, the respect for human rights and values. Finally, we notice in the sangha an ideological

pluralism: traditionalists advocating the return to the state religion represent a minority; there are others supporting the liberal ideology, typical of the west, linked with the capitalist mode of production; and a third group supporting socialist ideologies as more in tune with the Buddhist ethos.

There is, of course a parallel between the currents of thought inside the sangha and the social groups shaping the present society. The 'old elite' had been, at least relatively, in favour of the restoration of Buddhism. Links were established with Buddhist monks. However, this traditional group rapidly abandoned its ideological stand. The most important political group in the non-socialist countries was the 'new elite' which opted for a capitalist type of development, even when its phraseology was, and still is, socialist. In consideration of Buddhism's political usefulness the new elite tried to enlist the support of the sangha, sometimes even on minor issues, gaining in the process a certain amount of legitimacy among the rural mass, a factor of electoral importance. It granted privileges to the sangha with a view to deterring the advance of the leftist movement. But utilization of the Buddhist monks caused an unexpected contradiction: loss of prestige for the monks and polarization of the sangha which limited its political impact.

Buddhist symbols were employed by several popular groups like the Sri Lanka insurgents. As a rule, the rural masses are still deeply attached to Buddhism and sensitive to the intervention of the monks, although not fully approving of their new political role, especially when it does not concern fundamental issues. The political role of the sangha is on the decline, especially where the secular ideology of the capitalist system is making headway, and in the communist countries where religion is considered a private matter. Generally speaking this is the end of an epoch. Before coming to the conclusions let us examine how, during the period under review, Buddhism has been linked with the two opposing ideologies, capitalist and socialist.

Buddhism, Liberalism and Socialism

In the present struggle for the organization of society, as an economic basis and as ideological expression, Buddhism has played its part or at least been considered an important element. Except in Vietnam because of the particular circumstances, it has not been presented as a third way between capitalism and communism. The pronounced tendency was more to prove Buddhism as in line with democracy or with socialism. Attempts were made during the war in Burma and lately in Thailand to enlist Buddhism to serve fascist movements. However, these are exceptions, considering the aversion of the Buddhist tradition to any type of fanaticism. Political and intellectual efforts have been made also to reconcile Marxism and Buddhism.

The exploitation of Buddhism as a political tool against communism

was most evident in Thailand and Burma. In Sri Lanka in 1947 one of the election slogans of the UNP was "Save Buddhism from the flame of Marxism",¹¹⁹ and in 1972, just before the elections, the maha nayaka of Mālwatta temple made a radio broadcast describing Marxism as an enemy of democratic freedom and the national and religious interests of the country. In Burma the Dhammantaraya Movement was used as an anti-communist weapon.¹²⁰ On the intellectual level the Buddhist concept of democracy was elaborated on the Buddhist political philosophy of the "social contract" between the king and the people.¹²¹ Other arguments have been advanced, such as the democratic tradition of the sangha, the value of the individual in the perspective of the karma and the interpretation of political or economic success within the framework of these two.

In various countries of south and south-east Asia efforts were not lacking to establish a link between Buddhism and socialism. In Burma in 1963, the Socialist Party announced its programme as a synthesis between Burmese Buddhist tradition and western socialism.¹²² In the same year, 200 Buddhist monks demonstrated near the Shwedāgon pagoda in favour of the Burmese Road to Socialism.¹²³ The intellectual arguments given for similarity between socialism and Buddhism were based on the fact that in the countries of Theravāda tradition, private property did not exist, because the whole territory belonged to the king. In this sense there is nothing new in the idea of nationalization of the means of production. It was also argued that the monastic tradition of equality, austerity, and compassion so central to Buddhism are normally conducive to a socialist form of society. In 1951, U Ba Swe, the then Minister of Defence, went a step further saying that Buddhism and Marxism were two guides for life, each one in its own particular sphere.¹²⁴

In Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk called his political movement Buddhist Socialism and after relinquishing power in 1975, retired, monk-like, to a rural retreat. In Laos, Prince Souvanna Phouma declared, "We Laotians are socialists through our religion".¹²⁵ In Ceylon, discussion about the congruency between socialism and Buddhism developed, and was clearly stated in the famous document of 1953, *The Revolt in the Temple*.¹²⁶ NM Perera, of the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaji Party (LSSP) affirmed that Marxism is not antithetical to Buddhism.¹²⁷ It may be recalled also that one of the founders of the Communist Party of Ceylon and its first president was a Buddhist monk, Udakandawela Sri Saranankara Thero.¹²⁸

Socialism is the official ideology of many bourgeois parties in south and south-east Asia where most of the new elites call themselves socialist as an affirmation more of national independence from the west than of real political will of organizing the nation on socialist lines. Only a minority goes to the extent of accepting all the consequences of the

passage to a socialist mode of production, and it is still due partly to the contradiction between Marxist philosophy and religion, coupled with past history of relations between religious institutions and socialist regimes.

The conclusions follow the same methodological pattern as the rest of the article, namely a sociological interpretation of the links between Buddhism and politics. It does not question in any way the intentions of the persons involved or the authenticity of their religious beliefs. Attention is concentrated on the social function of religion, which is the only pertinent question from a sociological point of view.

Social Function of Religion

The social function of religion is defined by two variables: the type of society, and the particular characteristics of the religious system. This is true of all religions and we have seen how much it was the case with Buddhism. Its social function changed when monarchies were abolished or when a socialist system was established. Theravada Buddhism played a role quite different from Mahayana. Not merely was it a matter of difference between societies or social groups, but the system of beliefs had its own special ethical and social impact.

Buddhism, which was born in a society where the political system had been well developed, spread to mercantile societies. For reasons already explained it was more functional than Brahminism at the time. Otherwise it would not have been adopted by Asoka or by the merchants. Theravada Buddhism was associated with feudal monarchies. It developed as state religion in the kingdoms established to control irrigation in agricultural societies (as in Ceylon) or to empower monarchy to directly control or appropriate the means of production as in mercantile societies elsewhere. The king who needed a backing of legitimacy for arbitrary powers got it from the organized religion of the sangha. Here was the origin of the union between the king and the sangha, and the latter's place of honour in the order of precedence.

The introduction of the capitalist system destroyed this structural unity and weakened the ideological function of legitimizing political power. In countries like Ceylon and Burma the colonial power abolished monarchy, shaking the foundations of the sangha establishment. In other countries, the penetration of the cultural values of the capitalist system transformed the monarchies from absolute to constitutional forms. The inroads of an economic system based on private appropriation of the means of production undermined one by one the major structures of the preceding modes of production. New social classes arose, in particular, the westernized elite which became the ruling class after independence, employing Buddhism not as a fountainhead of ideology but much in the same way as the British or the French colonizers were using Christianity for imperialist policy. The *raison d'être* for the union between state and religion lost its validity. A certain amount of religious legitimization was

still useful, in view of the cultural lag of the masses in terms of their objective position in the new system and their social consciousness. The role of Buddhism as a basic social ideology was replaced in the eyes of some Buddhist believers by a new function, namely that of providing the basis for social ethics. This is why Buddhist monks and laity have protested against the social injustice and inequality of the capitalist system in the name of principles and beliefs.

Socialist regimes have come into being. The 'socialism' of the SLFP in Sri Lanka is relatively well integrated into the capitalist system. In Burma it has been imposed by a military regime, hardly the best way to usher in a socialist future. The introduction of socialism in its Marxist form is new to reunified Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, except in North Vietnam which experienced it for the last 30 years. As a whole, in these countries socialism is still in the process of being built. It is thus rather difficult to foresee what kind of function will be fulfilled by Buddhism, whether confined to individuals or extending to the larger areas of cultural and social life. The handicaps of history weigh heavily on relationship between Buddhism and the new regimes. For example, Theravada Buddhism is linked with the feudal mode of production. Classical Marxist interpretation of religion does not leave much room for Buddhism except on the purely individual level. However, apart from historical factors and philosophical positions, points of contact seem to exist, and for a quite a few Buddhists these offer a basis for new social ethics in the building of a socialist society.

These conclusions in the form of a typology are proposed as first thoughts which, it is hoped, will form the starting point towards formulating a sociological framework for the relations between religious and political systems.

(Concluded)

- ⁸² H Bechert, op cit., p 371.
- ⁸³ Ibid., p 74.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., p 76.
- ⁸⁵ F von der Mehden, op. cit., p 12.
- ⁸⁶ M E Spiro, op. cit., p 385.
- ⁸⁷ H Bechert, op. cit., p 242.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p 252.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., pp 268, 269, 270.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., p 297.
- ⁹¹ G F Keyes, op cit., p 561.
- ⁹² F Bruce Morgan, "Location of Monk and Layman: Signs of Change in Thai Buddhist Ethics", *Contributions to Asian Studies*, Brill, Leiden, 1973, pp 72-73.
- ⁹³ F Houtart, op cit., p 259.
- ⁹⁴ H Bechert, op. cit., p 74.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., p 340.
- ⁹⁶ F Houtart, op. cit., pp 265-297.
- ⁹⁷ H Bechert, op. cit., p 65.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p 74.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p 140.

- 100 Ibid., p 135.
- 101 F von der Mehden, op. cit., p 20.
- 102 H Bechert, op. cit., p 154.
- 103 Ibid., p 94.
- 104 F von der Mehden, op. cit., p 20.
- 105 U Phadnis, op. cit., p 167.
- 106 Ibid., p 185.
- 107 F Houtart, op. cit., pp 341-358.
- 108 H Bechert, op. cit., pp 204.
- 109 F von der Mehden, op. cit., pp 21-23.
- 110 C F Keyes, op. cit., p 551.
- 111 H Bechert, op. cit., p 239.
- 112 Ibid., p 240.
- 113 Ibid., p 352.
- 114 Ibid., p 273.
- 115 Ibid., p 279.
- 116 Ibid., p 283.
- 117 Ibid., p 328.
- 118 Ibid., p 330.
- 119 U Phadnis, op. cit., p 171.
- 120 H Bechert, op. cit., p 160.
- 121 Ibid., p 166.
- 122 Ibid., p 150.
- 123 Ibid., pp 160-161.
- 124 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion, Politics and Social Change—A Sourcebook*, The Free Press, New York, Collier-Macmillan, London 1971, p 232.
- 125 H Bechert, op. cit., p 299.
- 126 D E Smith, op. cit., p 234.
- 127 U Phadnis, op. cit., p 146.
- 128 Ibid., p 145.

Marxian Political Economy

PART SEVEN

IN THE preceding three articles we saw how surplus value arises in production. We also developed the concepts of absolute and relative surplus value, and of the means by which the production of absolute and relative surplus value takes place. It may be recalled that absolute surplus value is produced by elongation of the working day beyond the point at which the labourer has produced an amount of value equivalent to the value of his labour power. It thus "forms the general groundwork of the capitalist system, and the starting point for the production of relative surplus value."¹ For, production of relative surplus value presupposes a division of the working day between necessary and surplus labour, and thus a lengthening of the working day beyond necessary labour, that is, it presupposes production of absolute surplus value. Relative surplus value is produced by shortening necessary labour time, that is, by decreasing the portion of a working day of *given* length that is expended in reproducing labour power. This occurs primarily through technical changes that increase the productivity of labour. So, for relative surplus-value production to be at all significant, techniques must be constantly 'revolutionized'. This requires as its basis the capitalist mode of production.

Viewing the matter in terms of the organization of the labour

process, for production of absolute surplus value it is sufficient that the producers organized as wage labourers be brought under the direct control of the capitalist who supervises the labour process, but does not change it, to begin with. Marx calls this "formal subjection of labour to capital." For instance, a merchant might provide the raw material to workers from peasant families who would make the product say, baskets, at their homes and then sell the product back to the merchant. Now if the merchant turns into a capitalist, and brings the basket-producers under one roof, and they produce baskets just as before, although the techniques of production as such have not changed, there has been a change in the relations of production. We now have the formal subjection of the basket-weavers as wage labourers to a capitalist. Relative surplus-value production, however, is the product of, and in turn reinforces, the *real* subjection of labour to capital, since it involves changes in the methods of production, and thus in the labour process.

While their analytical differences are no doubt important, absolute and relative surplus values are nonetheless species of the same genre, namely surplus value. In this article, we shall investigate the laws governing the rate of surplus values under conditions of both absolute and relative surplus-value production. We shall then examine the relationship between the value of labour power and wages, and briefly discuss various wage forms and national differences in wages. Finally, we shall offer some remarks by way of introduction to the crucial subject of the accumulation of capital.

Rate of Surplus Value

Let us recall that the rate of surplus value is the ratio of surplus labour to necessary labour. A change in the rate of surplus value can thus take place through a change in either surplus labour or necessary labour or both. Such changes depend in turn on changes in the length of the working day, the productiveness of labour and the intensity of labour. We may identify three 'pure' cases:

a) Intensity of labour and length of the working day are given and constant: In this case, a change in the rate of surplus value can occur only through a change in the productivity of labour. When the productivity of labour increases, the value of labour power and thus necessary labour, goes down. So surplus labour, which is the length of the working day *minus* necessary labour, goes up and so does the rate of surplus value. Here surplus value and value of labour power move in opposite directions.

It is important to note, however, that even as the rate of surplus value increases due to increased productivity (and the consequent decline in the value of labour power) *it is still perfectly possible for the mass of articles consumed by the worker, that is, his "standard of living" to go up.* This can happen to the extent that the *price* of labour power (his wages reckoned

in terms of the money commodity) stays above the now reduced *value* of labour power. To give a numerical example, let the working day be 10 hours, equal in money terms to Rs 40. Let the value of labour power be 5 hours, equal to Rs 15. To begin with, let the wage (the money price of labour power) be equal to the value of labour power, that is Rs 15. Now let an improvement in productivity take place that reduces necessary labour to 3 hours, equal to Rs 9. If the price of labour power does not decline to its new value, but only to Rs 12, equal to 4 hours, we have the result that (a) the rate of surplus value has gone up ($7/3$ as against $5/5$), but yet (b) the goods and services that can be consumed by the worker also goes up. As Marx puts it, "In this way, it is possible with an increasing productiveness of labour, for the price of labour power to keep on falling, and yet this fall to be accompanied by a constant growth in the mass of the labourer's means of subsistence."² One can see from this quote how absurd it is to ascribe to Marx any theory of declining real wages.³ One aspect of what Marx means by "immiserisation of the working class" an expression misinterpreted by many to mean declining wages, becomes clear in the sentence immediately following the above quote: "But even in such case, the fall in the value of labour power would cause a corresponding rise of surplus value, and thus the abyss between the labourer's position and that of the capitalist would keep widening."⁴

Marx's analysis in this context also makes clear that the *price* of labour power (wages) as distinct from the *value* of labour power is influenced to some extent by immediate and particular circumstances especially "the pressure of capital on one side, and the resistance of the labourer on the other."⁵

(b) The productivity of labour and the length of the working day are kept constant. In this case, an increase in the rate of surplus value is brought about by an increase in the intensity of labour. A working day of *higher* intensity contains more value than a working day of some length, but *normal* intensity. The greater intensity of labour leads to more rapid consumption of labour power, that is, a greater expenditure of energy by the worker, and hence to a higher value of labour power. Thus often an *increase* in the wage to compensate for speed-ups conceals a *decline* of it *relative* to the new, higher value of labour power. If the new level of intensity becomes general, that is, comes to prevail in all or most branches of production, it then ceases to be a source of additional surplus value. One must keep in mind, however, that international differences in labour intensity may still persist, even though within a given national economy there exists a tendency toward uniform intensity.

(c) Let the intensity of labour and its productivity be held constant. Here, an increase in surplus value (and its rate) necessarily takes place only through a lengthening of the working day. This of course implies, as in case (b), an increased wear and tear of labour power, and thus an

increase in its daily value. Thus, here as in case (b), surplus value and value of labour power move in the same direction. To some extent, increased wages (overtime allowance and so on) can compensate for the increased wear and tear of labour power that occurs during a longer working day. But it must be clearly recognized that, beyond a certain point, wage increases will not suffice to compensate for the increased exhaustion of labour power, with the result that: "The price of labour power and the degree of its exploitation cease to be commonsurable quantities."⁵

It is obvious that case (a) represents 'pure' relative surplus-value production, while case (c) represents 'pure' absolute surplus-value production, as does case (b). In practice, however, changes often occur not just in one of the three determinants—productivity of labour, intensity of labour and length of the working day—of the rate of exploitation, but in all of them simultaneously. The historically dominant trend in the presently advanced capitalist countries has been one of "increasing intensity and productiveness of labour with simultaneous shortening of the working day."⁶ That 'advanced capitalism' far from giving up pursuit of surplus value and profit and 'converging' towards socialism as alleged by the pretentious Galbraiths of bourgeois wisdom, attempts in fact to increase intensity of labour as much as possible through speed-ups and the like was recently demonstrated in the strike at General Motors' plant in Lordstown, Ohio in USA. The whole question of speed-up, Taylorism and so on, has been brilliantly analyzed by Harry Braverman.⁷

Capitalist "Efficiency"

We have seen that capital everywhere economizes on labour (and means of production) in its attempt to produce relative surplus value. This fact is presented as the 'efficiency' and 'rationality' of capitalist production by bourgeois apologists. But such claims ignore the total inefficiency and wastefulness of the system at the social level. As Marx puts it:

The capitalist mode of production, while on the one hand, is enforcing economy in each individual business, on the other hand, begets, by its anarchical system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour power and of the social means of production, not to mention the creation of vast number of employments, at present indispensable, but in themselves superfluous.⁸

The point needs to be emphasized that the technical revolutions that heighten productivity of labour can potentially liberate humanity from hard and wasteful toil. Scientific and technological progress constantly reduces necessary labour time, but it is only by abolishing the capitalist mode of production that the working day can be reduced to necessary labour time. However, as Marx points out, this 'necessary labour' would be greater in a socialist society for two reasons: "On the

one hand, because the notion of 'means of subsistence' would considerably expand, and the labourer would lay claim to an altogether different standard of life. On the other hand, because a part of what is now surplus labour, would then count as necessary labour; I mean the labour of forming a fund for reserve and accumulation."

Quite apart from the question of higher productivity, a society offers individuals more time for intellectual and social development "in proportion as the work is more and evenly divided among all the able-bodied members of society, and as a particular class is more and more deprived of the power to shift the natural burden of labour from its shoulders to those of another layer of society." This is indeed the most crucial point, for in capitalist society "spare time is acquired for one class by converting the whole lifetime of the masses into labour time." This is the real content of capitalist "efficiency".

Value of Labour-power and Wages

In our discussion of the rate of surplus value earlier, we saw that wages, or the price of labour power, could be different from the value of labour power, due to immediate and particular circumstances, for example, temporary fluctuations in demand and supply of labour power and so on. Far more important than the quantitative difference between wages and the value of labour power (which is merely a particular example of the general principle that the price of a commodity often deviates from its value) is the qualitative change involved in the transition from the concept of 'value of labour power' to that of wages as 'the price of labour.'

In everyday use, 'wages' are conceived of as the 'price of labour'. But if wages are the 'price of labour', then presumably 'labour' is the commodity of which wages are the price. But what is this commodity 'labour'? If 'labour' is a commodity, surely it must have value. Value is itself abstract labour and is measured as the labour time socially necessary to reproduce the commodity. So the 'value of labour' is the labour time required to reproduce 'labour'. But clearly this is an absurd and tautological statement. How does one 'produce' labour? Once this question is raised, the problem with the notion of 'value of labour' becomes clear. What the labourer sells to the capitalist is not 'labour' but the commodity, labour power. Marx explains the matter as follows:

That which comes directly face to face with the possessor of money on the market, is in fact not labour, but the labourer. What the latter sells is his labour power. As soon as his labour actually begins, it has already ceased to belong to him; it can therefore no longer be sold by him. Labour is the substance, and the immanent measure of value, but *has itself no value*.

Thus the concept of 'value of labour' is utterly irrational and imaginary. Nonetheless, this is an important illustration of the concept of fetishism

(the contradiction between 'appearances' or 'phenomena' on the one hand, and their 'essences' or underlying reality on the other): "These imaginary expressions arise...from the relations of production themselves. They are categories for the phenomenal forms of essential relations".¹²

Limits of Classical Economy

The formulation of the concept of 'labour power' as the commodity that the worker sells to the capitalist is a major step taken by Marx on the way to his discovery of the theory of surplus value. Surplus value follows quite logically once the value of labour power is identified and deducted from the length of the working day. Classical political economy (Adam Smith, Ricardo *et al*) could not develop a consistent and systematic doctrine of surplus value precisely because of its failure to distinguish between labour and labour power. This was so despite the fact that Ricardo very nearly gets to "the true relation of things". The methodological point here is well worth emphasizing. The classical economists started with the question, "What is the price of labour?", taking over uncritically the category 'price of labour' from everyday popular use. In the course of answering this question, they realized that "the natural price of labour" (its price abstracting from transient fluctuations of demand and supply) was determined by the cost of reproducing the labourer. Thus, as Marx puts it, the question, "What is the cost of production of the labourer?" unconsciously substituted itself in political economy for the original one; for the search after the cost of production of labour as such turned in a circle and never left the spot."¹³ (Emphasis added.) The point of method is simply this: Classical political economy, *because of its analytical framework, was unable to pose the question* which Marx was able to pose, and which led Marx to the theory of surplus value. The concept of labour power could not be developed within the problematic (loosely speaking, the theoretical) framework of classical political economy.

We see, then, that wages are nothing but the price of labour power. But the transformation of the value and price of labour power into the form of wages gives rise to important ideological consequences. Take for instance, the typical form of wages, the daily (or weekly or hourly) wage. Let us consider a worker being paid Rs 8 for a day's work in the factory. The wage-form falsely suggests that the worker is being paid for the whole day's work, for every hour that he works. If he works eight hours, the wage may be reckoned as Re 1 per hour. The fact that at the end of a part of the working day (say 4 hours) he has already repaid the capitalist for the wage, and for the rest he performs unpaid labour, is completely obliterated:

The wage form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour...Hence...the

decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour power into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form, which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists.¹⁴

Let us turn now to a brief discussion of various forms of wages and of national differences in wages.

Wage Forms

There are two major forms of wage payment that are of interest to us, time-wages and piece-wages. Time-wages, as the term suggests, are paid on a time basis, for instance, hourly or daily wages. Piece-wages are paid in terms of a given amount of money for each article produced. Each form has its own economic and ideological effects.

The time-wage, as we have already seen, gives the false impression that all labour is paid labour. Secondly, by increasing the intensity of labour, the capitalist can lower the price of labour power even in relation to its value, even though the hourly money wage remains the same (for we now have a greater expenditure of labour power in a given time), and extract a higher rate of surplus value. Hourly wages bring with them the possibility of part-time employment. This has important consequences. The capitalist can now extract surplus value from the worker without having to pay him the daily value of labour power by employing him just for a part of the working day. To quote Marx,

The capitalist can now wring from the labourer a certain quantity of surplus labour without allowing him the labour time necessary for his own subsistence. He can annihilate all regularity of employment, and according to his own convenience, caprice, and the interest of the moment, make the most enormous overwork alternate with relative or absolute cessation of work.¹⁵

However, the attempt to increase the rate of surplus value through increased intensity, part-time employment, lengthening of the working day and so on, creates in turn intense competition among the capitalists. Marx illustrates one consequence of this competition among capitalists by citing the complaint of some bread manufacturers that their competitors are undercutting them by paying very poor wages to their workers.

Piece-wages also mystify the distinction between paid and unpaid labour. Further, they intensify competition among workers. Since each worker's remuneration depends on the number of pieces turned out by him, he tries to produce as many pieces as he can in a given time. This leads to great intensification of labour, and also to competition among workers. This greater exertion by the worker subsequently leads to a

revision of the norms which provide the basis for fixing the piece-wage, effectively reducing the worker's remuneration. Further, since the form of the wage itself compels the worker to intensify his labour, the need for overseeing and controlling the process is reduced. Thus the capitalist is enabled to save on costs of superintendence. Piece-wages also lead to modern forms of "domestic labour", analogous to the "putting out" system that was referred to earlier. This has two possible consequences, both of which have been historically observed:

On the one hand piece-wages facilitate the interposition of parasites between the capitalist and the wage labourer, the "sub-letting of labour"... On the other hand piece-wage allows the capitalist to make a contract for so much per piece with the head labourer... at a price for which the head labourer himself undertakes the enlisting and payment of his assistant workpeople. The exploitation of the labourer by capital is here effected through the exploitation of the labourer by the labourer.¹⁶

Both piece- and time-wages are predicated on the same relation between the capitalist and wage labourer—the relation of exploitation. At the same time, relations between labourers differ somewhat, piece-wages accentuating individual differences between them and enhancing competitiveness among them. Even as it plays this negative role, "the wider scope that piece-wage gives to individuality tends to develop that individuality, and with it the sense of liberty, independence, and self-control of the labourers."¹⁷

Wage Differences

Finally, we turn to the question of national differences in wage to round out our discussion of wages. It will be recalled that included in the value of labour power is a so-called 'moral and historical' element. This moral and historical element refers especially to the specific conditions of existence of the class from which the working class is formed. What holds for the value of labour power holds also for the national differences of wages:

In the comparison of the wages in different nations, we must therefore take into account all the factors that determine changes in the amount of the value of labour power: the price and the extent of the prime necessities of life as naturally and historically developed, the cost of training the labourers, the part played by the labour of women and children, the productiveness of labour, its extensive and intensive magnitude.¹⁸

Quite apart from the differences in the value of labour power and wages among different countries, the differences in labour productivity imply modifications in the law of value applied to international exchanges of commodities. An hour of the more productive labour of, say, an advanced capitalist economy counts for more than an hour of the less

productive labour of, say, an underdeveloped economy. As capitalist production develops in a country, the productivity of labour in that country rises in international comparison. An important consequence of the higher productivity of labour that characterizes a developed one is that the wage rate can be much higher in the advanced economy, and yet the rate of surplus value can *also* be higher in that economy in relation to the less developed one. For instance, the standard of living (and thus also the real wage) of the average worker in the US is much higher than that of the average worker in Indian industry. At the same time, however, the productivity of labour is also far higher in the US. This could well give rise to the situation that during a working day of eight hours in the US, the worker produces a value equivalent to that of his labour power in two hours, while in India, the worker must spend half of his nine-hour working day to produce a value equivalent to that of his miserable subsistence. Thus the rate of surplus value in the US may be 400 per cent ($8/2$) while that in India may be only 100 per cent ($4\frac{1}{2}/4\frac{1}{2}$), even though the real wage in terms of the mass of various goods and services consumed is far higher in the US. Marx makes precisely this point when he says that "it will be found, frequently, that the daily or weekly...wage in the first (more productive) nation is higher than in the second, whilst the relative price of labour, that is, the price of labour as compared both with surplus value and with the value of the product, stands higher in the second than in the first."¹⁹

It is important, in this context, to note that higher productivity of labour merely makes possible higher real wages. Bourgeois economists and spokesmen repeatedly assert that wages are determined by the productivity of labour (or that wages should be tied to productivity) in the sense that "what the worker gets is in accordance with what he produces." Marx's position, on the contrary, is that wages have little direct association with productiveness of labour, but fluctuate around the value of labour power. This latter is a function both of the productivity of labour, and the historical conditions in which the working class is formed (the so-called 'historical and moral' element). As Marx states in his attack on Carey, "Carey tried to prove that...wages everywhere rise and fall in proportion to the productiveness of labour. The whole of our analysis of the production of surplus value shows the absurdity of this conclusion."²⁰

A Recapitulation

In this series of articles on Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production, we have so far developed what we may call the 'building blocks' required for the analytical structure. We started with the commodity as the 'cell' so to speak, of capitalist production, the latter being nothing but the generalization and the highest development of commodity production. We found that the commodity is both a value

and a use value; viewed in terms of social relations, it embodied a certain portion of total social labour, and thus it was a value, a congelation of *abstract labour* or labour-in-general; viewed as a specific object, possessing certain natural properties, it was a use value, a product of a specific kind of labour or *concrete labour*. Quantitatively value is the amount of socially necessary labour time required to reproduce the commodity. Understanding the concept of value both in its qualitative sense and in its quantitative sense, we studied the link between the concept of value and that of the fetishism of commodities. The latter concept was a means to understanding how in commodity (and especially capitalist) production, appearances completely mystify and even invert reality. We then proceeded to analyze the circuit of capital, M-C-M with the help of the concept of value. Recalling that value expresses itself as exchange value (which is why Marx calls the latter the phenomenal form of value), we assumed for the purposes of our initial analysis of the circuit of capital, that commodities exchange at their values. In the course of our analysis, we found out the 'secret' of surplus value. Surplus value was seen to originate in production, and was the result of the difference between the length of the working day and the value of labour power. Thus surplus value arises from the peculiar property of labour power, the commodity that the worker sells to the capitalist, namely that its expenditure create more value than is required to reproduce it. For the capitalist class, then, the working class is "the goose that lays the golden eggs."

The ceaseless quest of the capitalist class for surplus value and the course of the class struggle between Labour and Capital, give rise to various means of surplus-value production and these can theoretically be analyzed with the categories of absolute and relative surplus value. In the last three articles, and in the earlier part of the present one, we have elaborated this analysis. It is now time to bring the various analytical strands and categories together, to apply them to an analysis of the central aspect of the capitalist mode of production. It is to this task that we shall turn in the next article. We shall now make some preliminary remarks, to indicate the limits of our analysis, as we shall present it next time.

Accumulation of Capital

The circuit of capital commences with the step M—C, or specifically, $M \begin{matrix} \swarrow \text{LP} \\ \searrow \text{MP} \end{matrix}$ (where M stands for money; LP for labour power and MP for means of production). This step takes place in the sphere of circulation. The next stage C—P—C' is the production process, complete so soon as the raw materials are converted, using the instruments of labour, into a new product by the workers. *Potentially*, this commodity-product C' contains surplus value. But for it to actually become 'expanded value', that is, for the (potential) surplus value to be actually *realized*, this product must go into the market and be sold at a value

exceeding the initial value laid out in its production. This is step 3, $C'—M'$. It is the constant and successive repetition of these three phases ($M—C$, $C—P—C'$ and $C'—M'$) that constitutes the circulation of capital. We shall assume, in our subsequent analysis that the phases of circulation, $M—C$ and $C'—M'$, are effected in an uninterrupted fashion, and we shall focus on the production phase, $C—P—C'$, alone. This means that we retain the assumption that commodities exchange at their values; and that the problems arising in the conversion of money into the constituent (constant and variable) elements of productive capital, and the reconversion of the produced commodity into money, have to be considered later. It needs to be kept in mind of course that these problems do exist and periodically lead to 'crises' of certain kinds.

Secondly, capitalist society does not consist only of capitalists and workers who produce surplus value for the capitalists. The capitalist who extracts surplus value from his workers must share it with other capitalists, and also with landlords and all other unproductive strata who fulfil various functions in society as a whole. In the analysis that follows, we shall for the time being not go into the division of social surplus value into rent, interest, profit on merchant capital, profit on industrial capital, and so on. These issues are taken up later on. To begin with, therefore, we shall consider capitalist accumulation "from an abstract point of view, that is, as a mere phase in the actual process of production."²¹

The procedure we are adopting is necessary for a correct analysis for two reasons: The production phase of the circuit of capital $C—P—C'$ is absolutely essential to the expansion of value which is the defining characteristic of capital: surplus value can be realized in society as a whole (and distributed among the exploiting classes and unproductive strata) only when it has first been produced. Secondly "the simple fundamental form of the process of accumulation is obscured by the incident of circulation that brings it about, and by the splitting up of surplus value. An exact analysis of the process, therefore, demands that we should, for a time, disregard all phenomena that hide the play of its inner mechanism".²² So we must first study the essence of the problem, and then develop the more complex 'determinations'.

With these qualifying remarks in mind, we shall proceed next time to an analysis of capitalist accumulation.

A V BALU

(To be continued)

¹ *Capital*, vol I, Moscow 1967, p 509.

² *Ibid.*, p 523.

³ See, for instance, Joan Robinson, *An Essay on Marxian Economics*, London 1942 or almost any bourgeois economics textbook that refers to Marx.

⁴ *Capital*, vol I, p 523. The deviation of prices of commodities from their values, while seemingly "contradicting" the law of value, in fact is the means through which the law of value expresses itself. Marx develops this point, both in the chapter on money

in vol I of *Capital*, and also in vol III, and we shall have more to say on this later on.

⁵ *Capital*, vol I, p 527.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 530.

⁷ See H Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, New York 1974.

⁸ *Capital*, vol I, p 530.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p 537.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p 538.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 539-540.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 546.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 553-554.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 555.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p 559. The importance of the labour of women and children must especially be underlined in the case of the neocolonial countries of the 'Third World', where males drawn into the industrial working class from the rural areas leave their families behind. The women and children of the family continue to try and produce their own subsistence, and the capitalist has to pay the worker only to reproduce himself and not the whole family.

¹⁹ *Capital*, vol I, p 560.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p 563.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 565.

²² *Ibid.*

NOTE

Constitutional Changes: Problems and Prospects

BY CONSTITUTION is meant the document, or the body of principles, which define the different organs of government, their relationship to one another as well as between citizens and the organs of power. Taking the cue from James Bryce, C F Strong in his book *Modern Political Constitutions* defines a constitution as "a frame of political society organized through and by law, in which law has established permanent institutions with recognized functions and definite rights" and a constitutional state as "one in which the powers of the government, the rights of the governed and the relations between the two are adjusted."

The fundamental law of a state may be written or unwritten, though this distinction is rather deceptive. The British constitution is said to be unwritten though, in fact, the documents on which the governance of Britain is based are recorded in the Bill of Rights of 1589, the Franchise Acts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949, whereby the power of the House of Lords to amend or reject bills passed by the House of Commons was abrogated. Even in a country with a written constitution, custom and convention may silently vary the written provisions. Thus article II, section I of the Constitution of the United States of America provides that the president shall be elected by the citizens choosing electors who shall meet and elect the chief executive. In practice, the US president is directly elected, the electoral college merely recording the votes of the electorate state by state.

In the so-called unwritten constitutions, custom and convention play a greater part in solidifying the practice and procedure of election and government, but that is not to say that such custom and convention have nothing to do with a written constitution. For example, in the Constitution of India, according to article 74, the executive power of the Union is vested in the president who is aided and advised in the exercise of his functions by a council of ministers. Convention has grown in the last 26 years that the Indian president shall not have any more power than, say, the British monarch. That is to say, the president has neither any individual judgment nor discretion and shall have to function as the

cabinet directs him. What grew into a convention has received the imprimatur of the supreme court in *Shamser Singh v. State of Punjab*¹ where Chief Justice Ray held, contrary to what he himself had held in *Sardarilal v. Union of India*², that the president as well as the governor acts on the aid and advice of the council of ministers in executive action and is not required by the constitution to act personally without, or against, the aid and advice of the council of ministers.

Section 13 of the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill introduced on 1 September 1976 turns what was a convention into a statutory obligation and substitutes the following clause for the existing clause 1 of article 74: "There shall be a council of ministers with the prime minister at the head to aid and advise the president who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice."

Rigid or Flexible?

The distinction more fruitful for the present discussion is that between rigid and flexible constitutions. To take once again the definition from Strong, "the constitution which can be altered or amended without any special machinery is a flexible constitution. The constitution which requires special procedure for its alteration or amendment is a rigid constitution". Written constitutions are not necessarily rigid. Thus, the Sardinian constitution of 1848, which was adopted by Italy after her unification, was constantly amended to suit the specific requirements of age and progress. The danger of too much flexibility became apparent when Mussolini violated the spirit of the constitution to establish his dictatorship. It also happened with the Weimar constitution of Germany after the First World War. The German parliament, Reichstag, abdicated its powers and handed them over to a dictator. Hitler could do this by excluding from the Reichstag many Socialists and all Communists. The terror unleashed by the Brown Shirts in league with the Steel Helmets, the private armies of the Nazis, intimidated the remaining deputies into voting for Hitler in the notoriously rigged session of 21 March 1935. It could be argued that the easy amending process provided for in the Weimar constitution contributed to the rise of fascism in Germany, similar to the experience of Italy.

Perhaps due to that experience, the constitutions of the countries in Europe have been made rigid. Both in the constitution of the Fifth Republic in France and the Italian Constitution of 1948, the republican form of government was placed beyond the amending power. In the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, not only the form of government but the basic aspects of the federal system as also the principle of the basic rights have been exempted from amendment.

The Indian constitution, which was enforced in January 1950, has also the postwar feature of being rigid in the sense that the amending process is made conditional and does not depend on a mere majority in

parliament. Article 368 of the constitution, as originally enacted, provided for a stricter procedure for amending any provision than required for ordinary legislation. In all bills for such amendment, a majority of two-thirds of the members of each house of parliament present and voting and a majority of the total membership of that house was an indispensable condition. In certain specified bills, for example those seeking to amend articles 54, 55, 73, 163 or 241, the amendment was to be ratified by the legislatures of not less than half of the states.

Golak Nath Case

This was rigid enough. But a tension was created by the majority judgment of the supreme court in *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab*.⁸ It was a tenuous majority of one, because five of the learned judges for whom Chief Justice Subba Rao spoke held that a law amending the constitution was 'law' within the meaning of article 13 and, therefore, if such amendment contravened or purported to abridge any of the fundamental rights in part III of the constitution, it would be *ultra vires*. It was declared by the judges that "the parliament will have no power from the date of this decision to amend any of the provisions of part III of the constitution so as to take away or abridge the fundamental rights enshrined therein." They invoked the doctrine of prospective overruling and, therefore, did not disturb the earlier judgments of the court which had upheld the first, fourth and seventeenth amendments. It was a bench of 11 judges and, although five judges held to the contrary, the petition was dismissed. The scale was tilted by Justice Hidayatullah who held, with Chief Justice Subba Rao "that the fundamental rights are outside the amendatory process if the amendment seeks to abridge or take away any of the rights" and that "this court having now laid down that fundamental rights cannot be abridged or taken away by the exercise of amendatory process in article 368, any further inroad into these rights as they exist today will be illegal and unconstitutional unless it complies with part III in general and article 13 (2) in particular."

The reason for the majority decision was that the amending power regulated under article 368 is an ordinary legislative process and the result of the exercise of such power would therefore be nothing more than ordinary 'law' within the meaning of article 13 (9) and consequently be within its prohibition if it wanted to take away or abridge any of the rights in part III. On the other hand, the grounds for the dissenting judges were that the power conferred under article 368 is a constituent power to change the constitution, distinct and different from the ordinary legislative power conferred on parliament; and therefore there are no limitations whatsoever, express or implied, on the amending power; and any provision of the constitution be it in part III or any other part, can be amended under article 368.

It is obvious that the supreme court did not hold that parliament

was incompetent to amend any provisions in the constitution other than those in part III, provided the procedure laid down in article 368 was complied with.

After the aforesaid decision was delivered in the *Golak Nath* case, leftist opinion became vocal against the judgment throughout the country on the ground that it could very well inhibit structural reforms in the sociopolitical setup and that it tended to perpetuate the social *status quo*. The leftists were particularly anxious that, if the judgment stood, the right of property could never be touched. Did the apprehensions of the leftists have any basis, or were they justified? In order to understand the problem, we have to clarify certain basic postulates.

Property Right and Political Will

Marxism makes a distinction between personal property and private property:

The fundamental distinction between them is that personal property is the product of a citizen's personal labour, whereas private property is the basis and result of the exploitation of man by man... Personal property also differs markedly from private property in object, of which the main one for private property is the implements and means of production, and for personal property always articles of consumption. Personal property is always aimed at consumption, and that is its essential feature. Citizens may own as personal property only consumer goods, that is, articles serving the immediate satisfaction of their material and cultural requirements. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx wrote that under socialism "nothing can pass to the ownership of individuals except individual means of consumption."⁴

Article 10 of the constitution of the USSR reads: "The right of citizens to personal ownership of their incomes from work and of their savings, of their dwelling houses and subsidiary household economy, their household furniture and utensils and articles of personal use and consumption as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law."

In so far as articles 19 (1) (f) and 31 of the Indian constitution make the right of personal property fundamental, these should give no cause for worry to the leftists. Nor should the judgment in the case of *Golakath v. State of Punjab*, in so far as it declares that any amendment of the constitution taking away or abridging such right of personal property would be *ultra vires*.

The judgment should have caused anxiety, however, if it prevented the acquisition of private property or restriction of the right thereof. It could legitimately have caused such anxiety if its declarations had retrospective effect. But the majority clearly pointed out that they prospectively overruled, and the first, fourth and seventeenth amendments

to the constitution were not disturbed. The result was that, inspite of the judgment,feudal property could at all times be requisitioned or acquired. Article 31A inserted by the Constitution(First Amendment)Act gave wide power to the legislature to acquire any estate or any rights therein or to extinguish or modify any such rights. Article 31B provides for the ninth schedule, inclusion in which will save any act or statute from being challenged as *ultra vires* part III of the constitution.

In short, the first, fourth and seventeenth amendments to the constitution lifted any such bar as might have been assumed to follow from the original provisions against any socialistic measure. Particularly, in the field of land legislation, the government, if it had really the will, could have brought about basic changes and ensured the handing over of land to the tiller of the soil. In reality, however, the land reform measures have come off the legislative anvil so niggardly that the traditional rural economic and social structure seems not to have been affected at all. This is the charge which the planning commission made against the government, of lacking 'political will'in introducing and implementing land reforms. It is evident from certain indisputable facts. In West Bengal, for example, at the beginning of the Estates Acquisition Act and the Land Reforms Act, the big jotdars had extensive estates estimated at between 40 and 50 lakh acres. It is also indisputable that, except for the spell of 13 months in 1969-70 when the United Front government was in power, not much has been heard about the distribution of the lands of jotdars. The government admits to this failure by giving different figures of surplus lands in the different years. On the other hand statistics reveal that the number of landless labourers has increased from about 25 per cent at the beginning of the fifties to about 46 per cent at present.

Powers of Parliament

From all this, it is evident that amendment of the constitution, including part III, to nullify the effect of the judgment in *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* was not an indispensable exercise for introducing socialistic measures.

There should not have been any difficulty in acquiring other forms of private property as well, of course, with compensation. But who ever thought that in the existing social setup property would be acquired or requisitioned without compensation though the adequacy of such compensation would be beyond judicial scrutiny by virtue of the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act of 1955 ?

A tension, however, arose between parliament and the judiciary. The lawmakers almost took it as a challenge and the government was ultimately obliged to amend part XX, making constitutional amendment a part of the exercise of the constituent power of parliament and immunizing it from any inroad by article 13. The Constitution (24th Amendment) Act has been upheld by the supreme court in *Keshavananda Bharati v. State*

of Kerala⁵, but the power has been held to be such as does not destroy the essential feature or the basic structure or framework of the constitution. As Justices Hegde and Mukherjea said, the parliament has no power to abrogate or emasculate the basic elements or fundamental features of the constitution such as the sovereignty of India, the democratic character of our policy, the unity of the country, the essential features of the individual freedoms, nor has it the power to revoke the mandate to build a welfare state and egalitarian society. Chief Justice Sikri added that it seemed to have been a common understanding that the fundamental features of the constitution, namely, secularism, democracy and the freedom of the individual would always subsist in the welfare state. Justice Jaganmohan Reddy said that the power to amend even under the present article 368 would not include the power of totally abrogating or emasculating or damaging any of the fundamental rights or the essential elements in the basic structure of the constitution or of destroying its identity. Justices Shelat, Grover and Khanna agreed.

Six judges constituting the minority held, however, that there cannot be any distinction between essential and unessential features of the constitution (to raise any impediment to amendment of alleged essential features) and that parliament in exercise of its constituent power can amend any provision of the constitution. Justice Beg of the minority said that "the power of amendment was wide enough to erode the constitution step by step so as to replace it by another constitution." But even the dissenting six could not support wholesale abrogation at one stroke and, though they held the power to be plenary, such power could only be exercised "through orderly and peaceful changes."

Beyond Amendment

What is the consensus of the judges in the Keshavananda Bharati case about the essential or basic features of the constitution? The answer may be found in the observations in Chief Justice Sikri's judgment:

The basic structure may be said to consist of the following features:

- (a) Supremacy of the constitution,
- (b) Republican and democratic forms of government,
- (c) Secular character of the constitution,
- (d) Separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary,
- (e) Federal character of the constitution.

Further, "the above structure is built on the basic foundation, that is, the dignity and freedom of the individual. This is of supreme importance. This cannot by any form of amendment be destroyed."

While the anxiety of the judges for maintaining the basic features of the constitution is appreciated, it appears that the concept of a rigid constitution has been made further rigid by the judgment. The widely accepted distinction between a rigid constitution and a flexible constitution

is based on procedural rigidity. Rigid constitutions are those to amend which a more elaborate procedure is required than just a decision. It is almost for the first time that a court has pronounced that a constitution may have certain essential features which parliament being the creature of that constitution can never amend.

Are the indicia of a rigid constitution extensible in the way in which the supreme court has indicated?

On the question of the federal form of government, different countries have dealt with it in different ways and, even though some have had a rigid form of federal government, it did not take much effort on their part to increase the powers of the central authority. For example, the Swiss constitution is rigid in the sense that no amendment can be made except on a referendum, but such referendums when made by the legislature have almost uniformly succeeded in getting the consent of the people to constitutional changes. K C Wheare, in his *Federal Government* (4th edition) has quoted statistics to show that out of 64 referendums made by the general legislature 49 were accepted by the voters. On the other hand, where such referendums were proposed by 50,000 voters according to the constitution, the proportion is woefully small. Out of 61 plebiscites held on such referendums, only seven were accepted. But, when the general legislature in its turn referred the same defeated proposals, the proportion of success was again high. Thus, it made a referendum of 13 out of the aforesaid 61 proposals and this time nine of them were accepted. Wheare has therefore observed, "It seems clear that in Switzerland proposals for amendment which commended themselves to the general legislature have in most cases been accepted by the people. If the Swiss constitution is rigid, the Swiss people are flexible."

Experience in Other Countries

The experience of Australia has been different. The federation was established in 1901 and since then twelve referendums were held, but the electorate refused to admit any except four out of which only the amendments of 1928 and 1946 were important, the former validating the financial agreement of 1927 and the latter granting power to the commonwealth parliament to legislate on social services. The amendments proposing power to the parliament to deal with corporations, industrial disputes, labour, and employment, regulation of wages and conditions of work in the trades, undertakings and callings have all been lost. Clearly the rigidity of the constitution has taken a heavy toll of those amendments which were meant to arm the parliament with power to legislate on social welfare measures.

Where amendments have failed, custom and usage have, however, succeeded. As Wheare has said, "the commonwealth has increased its powers and position by methods other than that of the amending process." These methods included those of judicial review, though, in

this respect, Canada had little luck. In the *Attorney General of Ontario v. The Attorney General of Canada*⁶, the question before the privy council was whether the legislature of Ontario had the jurisdiction to legislate on the liquor trade on which the parliament of Canada had already enacted a legislation which had been held valid by the privy council in 1882. The judicial committee went back on its previous decision and held the Ontario legislation valid on the finding that parliament had no jurisdiction to encroach on the subjects allotted to the provincial legislature under section 92 of the Constitution Act. The parliament could legislate on peace, order and good government of the dominion and, while legislating on such subjects, could affect the items of matter allotted to the provincial legislature if it could not be helped. Some ray of hope for wider interpretation of the parliament's powers came from the decision of the privy council in *Re: Regulation of Aeronautics*⁷ in which the judicial committee said,

But while the courts should be jealous in upholding the charter of the provinces as enacted in section 92 it must no less be borne in mind that the real object of the Act was to give the central government those high functions and almost sovereign powers by which uniformity of legislation might be secured on all questions which were of concern to all the provinces as members of a constituent whole.

Judicial decision seems to make clear that the parliament of Canada had authority to enact legislation on matters of common concern to all the provinces to secure uniformity. The expectations were belied by the decision of the judicial committee in the *Attorney General of Canada v. The Attorney General of Ontario*⁸ in 1937 where they held the power to legislate for peace, order and good government extended to legislations in time of emergencies and economic dislocations but the Bennett New Deal legislation did not make such an emergency which could justify the invoking of the general power to enact that legislation. The case of Canada is an extreme one, because here is a country whose constitution can be amended only by the British parliament and only after consent is given by Quebec and perhaps also by Ontario. One of these provinces can veto any proposal for amendment. The division of powers between the centre and the provinces has thus attained an inflexible rigidity, which could not be softened even by the judicial process.

In the United States amendments to the constitution, particularly the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and the 17th have increased the powers of the general government. The 16th amendment removed restrictions to levy income-tax and now the congress can impose income-tax irrespective of population and without regard to the necessity of apportionment between the states. The 13th amendment abolished slavery, the 14th extended the due process clause to state legislations also, and the 18th imposed prohibition. Each of these amendments contained the clause that the

"congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation" which obviously increased the power of the congress to legislate for the states as well. It was held by the supreme court in the Agricultural Adjustment Act case that the power of the congress to tax included that to levy tax for matters beyond or outside the legislative list for the government, though in the case in question the court held by a majority that the Act was not merely a taxing statute but one to regulate agricultural production, a matter on which the congress had no competence to legislate. But, in the cases arising out of the Social Security Act, namely, *Steward Machine Co. v. Davis*⁹ and *Helvering v. Davis*¹⁰ the supreme court overruled itself and held that appropriations for unemployment insurance and old-age pension were entitled to be upheld because congress had the power to tax for the general welfare. It was observed that the term general welfare was elastic in its meaning and, in any event, no narrow or parochial meaning should be given to the term.

Thus, the power of the general government has, in many a federal constitution, been extended by judicial pronouncements. Not a little influence has been exercised by usage, or custom and convention. The distinction between the two is that, whereas usage has no binding force, custom or convention is binding, though in both cases it cannot be equated with law.

Dangers of Overcentralization

The net result of all these factors has, however, been to increase the power of the general government at the expense of the regional governments. One reason is the stress and strain of the inter-war years as well as the post-war period since 1945. The central government insisted on and got increased control over the regional or provincial administrations on the plea that national security and the integrated national economy which it demanded required more concentration of power in the central government. The other reason is the financial supremacy of the general government. In the federations of Australia, Canada, Switzerland and the United States as well as India, subjects of tax are more diversified and multifarious for the central government. These are more elastic in their output of revenue than the subjects on which the regional governments can tax. The result is a chronic deficit in the revenues of the latter with the resultant dependence for support on the centre. He who pays the piper calls the tune and the centre is unscrupulous enough to exploit the economic dependence of the states to augment its own powers of control over the regions or the provinces.

Though thus historically it would seem that the federal structure of states faces steady erosion, it cannot be said that "it is not worthwhile to preserve federal government". To say this is not to say that the centre should not be strong. Mechanisms have to be strengthened, oiling the cogs and wheels, and transmission belts and conveyors between the centre

and the regions. The regions must have freedom to operate in their allotted fields, which must be broad and wide enough to enable a free play of the regional characteristics and distinctiveness. They must be given sufficient proportion of the revenues raised by the centre, not only in the ratio of their respective contributions but also their populations. For, history is the testimony that national prejudices die hard. The latest proof was provided by the Bangladesh declaration of independence from Pakistan, the most important reason being the constant erosion of federalism and the strengthening of the centre beyond tolerable limit. The snapping of federal ties in Pakistan was regarded by the people of Bangladesh as colonization by the Punjabis of west Pakistan. The reverberations of the movement are being echoed even now among certain other linguistic and national entities of Pakistan, namely, the Baluchis, the Sindhis, and the Pathans. Statesmanship and determination of the central leaders of Pakistan to preserve a genuine federal structure alone can prevent further disintegration in future.

As Wheare has said in *Federal Government*, "One of the urgent problems in the world today is to preserve diversities either where they are worth preserving for themselves, or where they cannot be eradicated even if they are not desirable, and at the same time to introduce such a measure of unity as will prevent clashes and facilitate co-operation. Federalism is one way of reconciling these two ends." The principle of federation, though originally a concept which found its full bloom in the American constitution at the end of the eighteenth century, has not only been accepted but also developed and strengthened in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics after the October Revolution. The constitution of the USSR grants to the republics the rights to maintain armies, carry on independent foreign relations and even to secede from the Union.

Civil Liberties and Fundamental Rights

The supreme court of India was therefore right in insisting that the federal structure in the Indian Union is an essential feature. So also are the guarantees of democracy, the assurance of "the dignity and freedom of the individual" which are found in articles 14, 19 and 21 inspite of the retrogressive provisions of clauses 2 to 7 of article 22 which approves detention without trial.

These freedoms, namely, the right not to be deprived of life or liberty except in accordance with procedure established by law, freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association, movement and occupation have been recognized as fundamental freedoms throughout the world. In bourgeois as well as socialist constitutions, these are not less than fundamental rights. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations these rights feature as basic rights to be ensured and established in all countries and by all nations.

The secular character of the Indian constitution is similarly basic,

because to guarantee that is to guarantee freedom of belief and opinion in religious matters.

But are they unamendable? There are certain constitutions which expressly make them so, like the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany which immunizes both the federal structure as well as basic law from any amendatory process. The constitutions of Italy and the Fifth French Republic likewise exempt the republican form of government from liability to any amendment. The supreme court of India has gone further. It has said that these basic features are not liable to amendment due to the operation of some immanent natural law even though the constitution may be silent in this respect and even if the textual interpretation of the amending provisions would not stand in the way of such amendment.

Is Parliament Supreme ?

Evidently such opinions inevitably raise the question of the supremacy of parliament. It is countered with the question of the tyranny of majority. Inevitably again references to British parliament are made. If democracy can subsist in the United Kingdom with parliament as a supreme authority unfettered by any inhibition, legal or moral, why cannot democracy survive with such parliamentary supremacy elsewhere? In other words, this view is held as a counter to the conceptualization of the inalienability or unamendability of what are known as the fundamental rights.

One correction of the general view requires to be made so far as the supremacy of the British parliament is concerned. Legally the British parliament is supreme, but in reality the convention is that such issues are always specifically taken to the electorate. In 1910, the ruling Liberal party, though it commanded a comfortable majority in the House of Commons, thought fit to go to the electorate with its proposals to curtail the powers of the House of Lords.

As E C S Wade has shown in his introduction to Dicey's *An Introduction to the Law of the Constitution* (10th Edition), parliament is not all that supreme. One of the indices of its supremacy should have been that it could not bind its successors. But in *British Coal Corporation v. The King*,¹¹ the judicial committee of the privy council, while agreeing to the legal concept of sovereignty of parliament, would not accede to the proposition that parliament could repeal by implication or otherwise section 4 of the Statute of Westminster, because it has "no relation to realities". Wade therefore concludes that "this decision does no more than give judicial recognition to the author's view that the existence of actual limitations of power was not inconsistent with the sovereign power of parliament. The external limitation...was the possibility or certainty that some laws would be disobeyed or resisted even if made under the most despotic monarchies." He continues: "Whatever view lawyers may form

as to the nature of basis of parliamentary sovereignty, the ultimate sanction must lie in the possibility of resistance to the exercise of power by those who are subject to it."

Wade finds the internal limitations of sovereignty in the convention that has now grown of consulting interests, and associations or organizations representing those interests, before enacting statutes. He says, "Nowadays it is seldom the case that even a minor bill is presented by a minister until he has taken the views of organized interests whose members are most concerned with the contents of the proposed legislation." As for the system of advisory committees "the result is that before the sovereignty of parliament can be invoked to make or unmake laws, the normal process, at all events as regards the administration of internal public services, is for the minister to seek advice from the appropriate advisory committee."

Sovereignty, Legal and Political

Carl Friedrich, in his *Constitutional Government and Democracy*, has found another limitation in the alternating two-party government. British political history is one of almost regular periodic sharing of power between two parties, formerly Whigs and Tories, later Conservatives and Liberals, and now between Conservatives and Labourites. The tendency of the British electorate not to fix the choice on any one party or person indefinitely, as in India, acts as a check on the adventures of any one political party in the domain of constitutional government.

Restrictions by convention, usage or custom which are potent in the case of British parliament are articulated in the written constitutions of Canada, Australia, the United States and Switzerland. All these countries have made the amending process difficult. A further check has been exercised by public opinion. Whereas in Switzerland, the proposals of the general legislature for constitutional amendments have by and large been accepted magnanimously by the electorate, such has not been the case in the other federations, where amendments have been very tardy.

But the question is, again, not so much the flexibility or otherwise of the amendatory process. Let the process be as rigid as possible but can the general legislature, by going through whatever elaborate procedure is laid down, change the essential features of the constitution? Can the United States congress replace the presidential form of government by the cabinet or the parliamentary form? Can it, for example, set up a monarchy? To continue in the same strain, can the Indian parliament abrogate all the fundamental rights? Or, can it set up a unitary form of government in place of the present federal structure?

The constitution of the USSR can, according to article 146, be amended by decision of the supreme soviet adopted by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes cast in each of the chambers, but

can the supreme soviet abrogate the socialist system?

We have advisedly asked ourselves the last question, because it suggests its own answer. If the supreme soviet of the USSR can be imagined to be so manned that its members might upset the social organization of the country and restore capitalism, it is no longer a case of amendment but becomes a case of coup d'état or capture of power by the enemies of socialism. Such "adventures in metaphysics" in the words of Sir Ivor Jennings, result from a very common confusion between legal supremacy and political supremacy. As Wade has said, "Supremacy in law-making is to be distinguished from ultimate political sovereignty", and necessarily laws have to be in aid of that political sovereignty. To question whether parliament can abrogate the basic structure of a political society is, therefore, an exercise in the improbable or the ridiculous, because such things can never happen through legislation but can come about only through rebellion or revolution.

Permissible Extent of Amendment

It is, on that ground, an adventure in mysticism to investigate whether the easy amendatory process provided for in the Weimar constitution was the cause of the emergence of Nazism in Germany. Did the German parliament abdicate its power? Carl Friedrich, if I may say so with respect, correctly answers:

The German parliament did not abdicate. In order to get parliament to do his bidding, the Hitler government first purged it of many Socialists and all Communists. This purge terrorized many of the remaining deputies. It is significant that constitutional lawyers apologizing for the National Socialist government have themselves shown convincingly that the constitution of the republic was not only violated but actually abolished, when a considerable group of deputies was excluded from parliament. These opposition leaders were prevented from participating in the session of March 21, 1933 which voted to invest Hitler with absolute power. It was by revolutionary force, *by a coup d'état, that Hitler came into power.* (Emphasis added).

The question of amendment, or the extent of amendment, is therefore relevant only if we assume the continuance of the particular political and social system. But within the range of the same political system questions as to the permissible extent of amendment have validity. Thus, it is permissible to enquire whether in a particular capitalist system, parliament has the jurisdiction so to amend the constitution as to strengthen the monopolies, or to deprive the citizens of civil liberties or to suspend the representative form of government.

In *Keshavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* the supreme court merely echoed the sentiments and convictions of a section of the people, maybe the largest, in holding that parliament has no authority to take away the liberties of the people or to abolish the republican form of government or

to dilute or make redundant its secular principles. But what was the basis for that opinion?

The supreme court laid stress on the preamble which declares that the people of India have given themselves the constitution and therefore parliament, a creature of the constitution, cannot kill its mother by changing it beyond recognition. The court relied on certain supra-legal principles.

Supra-legal Principles

There is no lack of instances in the history of humanity of such reference to supra-legal principles in fighting for social progress against the reactionary elements in society. Philosophers and social scientists during the period of the Enlightenment in Europe at and about the time of the French Revolution invoked such principles. Some relied on 'social contract' and others on 'natural law' whose principles could not be negated by any state-made law. And the first tenets of those theories were the equality of man and his liberty. They cried death to all institutions that denied such equality and liberty. As against that, the apologists of state sovereignty declared that enacted law was the highest achievement of man. In other words, whatever happened to be enacted at any time should not be challenged as reactionary. In other words, these theorists considered the state as the instrument of progress and whatever the state happened to enact was considered to be the acme of bliss until it was replaced by the people acting in and through the state. They later distorted Hegel's famous statement, "All that is real is rational; all that is rational is real." If that were so, why was Hegel so enthusiastic about the French Revolution which destroyed the French monarchy which was very real in the narrow sense of the term? In his famous tract, *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Engels explains this apparently self-contradictory attitude of Hegel thus:

Now, according to Hegel, reality is, however, in no way an attribute predictable of any given state of affairs, social or political, in all circumstances and at all times...in the course of development, all that is previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity, its right of existence, its rationality. And in the place of moribund reality comes a new, viable reality—peacefully if the old has enough intelligence to go to its death without a struggle; forcibly if it resists this necessity. Thus the Hegelian proposition turns into its opposite through Hegelian dialectics itself: All that is real in the sphere of human history becomes irrational in the process of time, is therefore irrational by its very destination; is tainted beforehand with irrationality; and *everything which is rational in the minds of men is destined to become real, however much it may contradict existing apparent reality.* (Emphasis added.)

Idéas, ideals and values have, therefore, a great relevance to any

approach to law and we can reject rationally any system of law which negates or contradicts these values. In other words, there is nothing to prevent us from declaring *ultra vires* any law which takes away the rights of man. Theoretically speaking, therefore, enacted law can be declared as law-violating legislation and accordingly *non est*. We shall discuss later whether the judiciary can be entrusted with this role and whether *volksgeist* (world-spirit) can speak through the instrumentality of courts.

Our present purpose is to show that, from the point of view of social science, we can say that there is a higher law to which all positive law must correspond, at peril of being dubbed non-law or anti-law.

Evaluation of Law and Constitution

There is confusion in some circles about the Marxist view on law and according to them, Marxism does not recognize higher ideals or values as far as law is concerned. It is true that Marxism does not recognize natural law as a "special supra-law-normative system". While Marxism recognizes the inalienable rights of man, it deduces these rights, not from man's 'natural' but from his 'social' nature, as deriving from his participation in the social process of production. Marxism discounts the teleological concept of law assuming the existence of some transcendental values which influence law-making and serve as a standard of criterion for good or bad law. For a Marxist, aims do not determine law which is ultimately conditioned by the mode of production and the relations of production involved in it. But just because Marxism advocates the development of relations of production from the capitalist to the socialist, the Marxist criterion for the evaluation of legal norms is not only the extent to which they reflect the material and spiritual reality, but also the extent to which they transform the social relations of production which they regulate. Opposing the German jurist, Post, who maintained that law was purely a product of need and it was therefore useless to seek in it any ideal basis, Plekhanov stated;

But the real foundations of any given system of law do not exclude an ideal attitude towards that system on the part of the members of the given society. Taken as a whole, society only gains from such an attitude of its members towards that system. On the contrary, in its transitional epochs, when the system of law existing in society no longer satisfies its needs, which have in consequence of the further development of productive forces, the advanced part of the population can and must idealize a new system of institutions, more in keeping with the spirit of the time.¹²

Call it natural law or an "idealized system of laws", the result is often the same. As V A Tumanov, the Soviet legal theoretician observes, "If natural law is seen as a doctrine of the rights of man and the citizen, of ideas, values and their contribution to the evolution of law, then the Marxist teaching on legal consciousness, legal ideals and the rights of

man could merit, somewhat tentatively, the title of natural law in its materialist interpretation”.

Some of these ideals or values, looked at from either Marxist or non-Marxist point of view, offer a valid criterion for evaluation of law, and certainly of the constitution. Take, for example, the fundamental freedoms of man and the citizen, namely, his right to freedom of speech and of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of movement, freedom of association or organization. These are essential rights even for the purpose of improving the status of the citizen as a participator in the productive process of society. If a constitution runs contrary to these rights, or takes away these rights, such changes are to be opposed as beyond the power of the legal sovereign wherever that may be lodged, whether in parliament or elsewhere.

44th Amendment

To come nearer home, the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill is placing the directive principles in part IV above the fundamental rights and, if any legislation contains a declaration that it is for the enforcement of the directive principles, such legislation will be *intra vires* even if it violates fundamental rights. The provision is one for denigration of fundamental rights, sugar-coated with sentiments for social welfare. The directive principles as embodied in part IV were originally directives to the state to do its social engineering. The proposed amendment places the entire burden of such social engineering on the citizens, whereas implementation of directive principles should not have required deprivation of any of the fundamental rights.

The single fundamental right that might stand in the way is the right of property as embodied in article 19 (1) (f) and article 31 but public opinion is almost united in the stand that this right of property might be removed from the chapter on fundamental rights and made a legal right. On the other hand, to realize and maintain the rights mentioned in the directive principles would require the spirit of the dispossessed classes to be roused, which is not possible unless the fundamental rights are guaranteed to the people. In other words, grant of rights to the people is one thing but their consolidation is another and it is only the grantees, namely, the citizens who can help in the process of consolidation. But such efforts on their part are not possible without, say, the right of association, the right to free speech and free expression, of opinion and so on. It is wrong to suggest, indeed such suggestion borders on dishonesty, that implementation of directive principles would necessarily require surrender of fundamental or essential human rights. In fact, the provision tends to create an illusion that socialistic measures cannot be brought about without lowering the dignity of the individual. It tends to perpetuate the calumny that socialism is incompatible with civil liberties. If the government were so eager to implement the directive principles and give them the status

of fundamental rights, nothing prevented them from making a change. In fact, a strong body of opinion demanded this of the ruling party. By refusing it and insisting on supremacy of directive principles over the fundamental rights the ruling party is really deceiving the people, and in effect, abolishing fundamental rights.

Moreover, according to article 31C of the amended constitution, only a declaration by the legislature would be enough: to the effect that the legislation in question is to implement the directive principles. None should have the right to scrutinize whether the legislation was in effect implementing or advancing those principles. Such vague statements on which the rights of man are going to be tampered with are not laws but only pronouncements as absurd as justice without law! We witness a strange phenomenon of law being negated by non-law, enacted fundamental rights being contradicted not by any precise legal formulation of some other, maybe socially more important, rights but by the draftsman's announcements blindly endorsed by an obedient party majority. It is surrendering the law-creating role of the state to mere chance and caprice, to executive whims and fancies.

It may be interjected that article 31C contemplates legislation by sovereign legislatures. Why should it be assumed that declarations under that article would be those of the executive?

Danger of Absolutism

The answer is obvious. In the cabinet system of government, legislation is initiated, piloted and taken to its conclusion by ministers who are the heads of departments apart from being members of the legislature. Intrinsically speaking, the cabinet is the head of the executive, and legislation is initiated by it in the interest of the executive. Party system of government does the rest of the job and the parliamentary whip bends the will of the majority of the legislature to the directive of the government. Needless to say, even the ministers are not free agents. Bureaucracy, with greater knowledge of details and intricacies of the administration, too easily makes the ministers its pliable instruments by intimidating them that, unless the proposals are accepted, the whole machinery of government will grind to a halt.

This fusion of legislative powers occurring in the cabinet system of government poses the great danger of absolutism. In Britain, in the words of Friedrich, this relative absolutism has been endurable due to "the institutionalization of the opposition and the regular alternation of two large parties in controlling this broad power." Though the separation of powers on which Locke and later Blackstone counted did not materialize—Blackstone said that wherever the two powers of making and enforcing the laws are united together there can be no public liberty—there was a new separation, with functions assigned to the judiciary. In Britain, "the general principle of the independence of the judiciary has

come to be universally accepted as a basic tenet of constitutionalism and government according to law."

This takes us to the question of the efficacy of the judiciary as a guardian of the constitution, a thorny question not only for India but also for western democracies. In Europe for example, citizens have been more in favour of statutory legislation to protect their interests than the judiciary, whom they by and large identify with the conservative forces. According to the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill, article 31C and the other amendments seek to weaken the power and scope of judicial review in this country and the supporters of such provisions have not been hesitant in saying that the judiciary in India has by and large been in favour of the vested interests.

In Britain in the early days men like Bentham bitterly criticized the role of the judiciary and the point of view of such men was that it was prone to protecting the vested interests. Bentham pleaded for statutory legislation to protect the liberties of the people and to ensure to them fair wages and healthy conditions of labour. Not only the economists but also such men of literature as Charles Dickens and William Godwin took up their cudgels against courts. Dickens was not sparing in his withering criticism of the role of the judges. Such a criticism is also found in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.

Judiciary's Role Reconsidered

In the United States too, the experience has not been too happy. Since the days of Marshall who set the ball rolling by his famous judgment in *Marbury v. Madison*¹³, there have not been any lack of critics of the judges and the courts. In the days of Marshall the conflict rose to such a pitch that Jefferson even thought of impeaching Marshall. Due process in the 14th amendment was used to stall social progress and, in consecutive decisions the supreme court of the United States came forward to give protection to vested interests. Matters came to a head during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt who threatened, in the words of his political enemies, to pack the court. However, the court beat a retreat when the Reorganization Bill was proposed and it went back on its previous decisions in upholding the validity of the National Labour Relations Act. The supreme court of the United States since then has acted as a lever of social progress and in such decisions like *Brown v. Board of Education*¹⁴, it has used the concept of due process to prevent interference with civil liberties.

In Europe, perhaps because of experiences of the courts' leanings towards autocracy and of the Roman civil law's slant towards codification and greater emphasis on state sovereignty, jurists and lawyers alike have not demanded supremacy for the courts. Instead, they relied more on statutory safeguards of freedom of speech and expression, right of free assembly and freedom of the press.

Of late, however, there has been a veering round to an opinion in favour of the judiciary, which is also reflected in ideologization of the concept of "justice without law". Justices went so far as to say that law is what a judge finds it to be. Roscoe Pound was for giving the judge greater flexibility and, according to him, much of law can be reduced to the concept of social engineering. In *Interpretations of Legal History* he said: "We are beginning, in contrast with the last century, to think of jurists and judges and lawmakers in the same way... more and more we have been coming to think in terms of the legal order—of the process, not in terms of the law—the body of formulated experience or system of ordering."

Obviously such an extreme formulation of the role of judges cannot be accepted. There are dangers that such a wide discretion given to the judges may result in the reactionary forces "taking the activities of the bourgeois state machinery outside the legal and constitutional framework". In fact, without codification the centre of gravity of law will tend to shift and "justice without law" may very well lead to unrestricted action by the executive authority and its administrative bodies. The very aim of taking legal sovereignty from the executive to the court will thus negate itself and end by vesting more powers in the executive. In fact Pound himself is driven by the logic of his theory to include functions of the administrative bodies as well as of the courts within the law-making process.

Judges therefore must act in aid of the law and in accordance with it. But to say so is not to insist that the courts will be merely a rubber stamp of executive decisions. The judge will certainly have great degree of independence in applying the legal norms to concrete situations and though he may not interpret away the substance of the norms, it is the function of the judge to enforce strict application of law. As a matter of fact, "the independence of judges and their subordination to the law alone are two aspects of one thing. The first aspect is that the court is strictly guided by the law and the second implies that in adjudicating cases the judges are independent of any external intervention."

In the Soviet Union, where judges are meant to be strictly subordinate to law with the consequent restriction on their right to make law under the guise of interpretation, the first aspect just referred to is clearly brought out by the decision of the plenary session of the supreme court of the USSR, namely, "some judges consider so-called 'insignificant' formal departures from procedural law requirements admissible, forgetting the fact that undeviating observance of the statutory procedural rules is a *sine qua non* of ascertaining the truth in a case and adopting a correct decision."

Apart from the principles according to which changes should be brought about to bring the constitutional provisions in accord with the times and the requirements of progress, the question has been intermittently asked as to who should be on the guard against arbitrary changes in

the constitution or such changes which are either not called for nor in accordance with the needs of the times. It appears that even on the continent where no such reliance on courts is to be witnessed as in common-law countries like Britain and the United States, some kind of tribunals staffed with independent personnel have been set up to scrutinize and pronounce upon the validity or necessity of constitutional changes. Thus France has set up the constitutional council and Italy a constitutional court. In Italy it is composed of five members each from the legislative, executive and judicial organs of the state. In France the constitutional council decides on the request of the president, the prime minister or the president of either assembly whether the laws are in conformity with the constitution. Both these bodies seem to be an agency separate from the judiciary but vested with the power of adjudication. Carl Friedrich refers to the opinion of the French revolutionary, Abbe Sieyes, according to whom the distinction between the amending power and the legislative power required a guardian of the constitution. But, as the guardian could not be the judicial power, it must be a special political representative body. He demanded a jury of the constitution "a real body of representatives which I demand should have special function of judging all protests against any infringement of the constitution." This idea seems to be catching the minds of jurists in western Europe.

How to Resist Despotic Laws

The above discussion makes two specific points: 1) the courts should not be the creators of law but must subordinate themselves to the law; 2) the courts should have all power to decide, when interpreting the law or the constitution, whether such law or any changes in the constitution are legal or justifiable. This position requires to be stressed in our country where there are measures afoot to reduce the powers of the court. It is true that the courts in India, as elsewhere, are not free from imputation of partiality to the entrenched interests. That should appear from the various social welfare measures that have come to grief in the supreme court. One of the very first decisions of the supreme court led to the first amendment whereby the laws for abolition of the zamindari system were protected from judicial interference. We may also refer to the decisions of the supreme court on the abolition of the privy purse¹⁶ and the nationalization of banks.¹⁷ In the case of *Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* the court declared the 1st, 4th and 17th amendments *ultra vires*, all of which were meant to immunize land-reform legislation from attacks in law courts. Evidently this was a judgment which turned public opinion against the judiciary and by and large an opinion was formed, not without some justification, that our superior judiciary was out to protect the vested interests.

Even if that were so, as long as the present social system continues

in our country, it would be dangerous to assent to a proposition that the judiciary should be enfeebled. For a weak judiciary would mean a strong executive and, not as some would have us believe, parliamentary or legislative supremacy. Some separation of functions would therefore be necessary and, in the present setup one cannot think of anything else but a strong and independent judiciary. Public opinion should be relied upon to make the judiciary "behave" as in the United States. There is much truth in the conclusions of Friedrich that "in the absence of a constitution deeply rooted in tradition such as exists in England, Switzerland or Sweden, a judiciary capable of exercising judicial review will be required if a constitution, in the political sense of a set of techniques for restraining the actions of the government, is to be established".

There is also a revival of emphasis by modern jurists on the role of the judiciary. Francois Geny grants a comprehensive role to the judge in bringing about a just balance of conflicting private interests, which is one of his three basic principles about legal rules. So much has been the reaction against totalitarianism that Geny even supports the extreme and desperate sanction of insurrection in resistance to oppression of despotic laws.

Consequences of Constitutional Changes

In any event, amendments or changes in the constitution require a thorough probe into its probable consequences on the social and political process. Constitutional changes have been the subject of searching analysis and profound thinking in different countries and it would not be wise to dismiss the problem by merely invoking the sovereign parliament and saying that a sovereign parliament can at any moment make any changes in the constitution by which a political society is governed. Coming nearer home, we have to say that the Constitution (44th Amendment) Bill makes deep and in some cases radical changes in the constitutional set-up. It upsets the federal structure by providing that the centre can send military or police or both to quell what it considers to be a disturbance within the borders of a state and that it can do so even without consulting the wishes of either the people of the state or its elected government. It provides for a fresh system of constitutional dictatorship under which emergency may be declared in any area or portion of an area of the Indian Union with the resultant suspension of civil liberties not merely in the area concerned but also, if the central government so chooses, in other parts of India though these other parts may not be threatened either by internal disturbance or by external aggression. It provides for enactment of Draconian measures against so-called anti-national activities which are so widely and vaguely defined as to include all actions which may be unpalatable to the government in power. It reduces the number of subjects on which the state may legislate under article 248 (2) of the constitution. It reduces the power of judicial

review vested in the superior judiciary under articles 32 and 266 of the constitution and, in the cases of amendment to the constitution, it abrogates such powers altogether. It seeks to belittle the importance of fundamental rights, and a mere executive declaration (which a court is prevented from scrutinizing) that some vague social welfare objectives are involved will exempt any legislation from being charged as *ultra vires* any of the fundamental rights.

On the other hand, the crying abuses of the constitution, particularly of the provisions of part XVIII have not been eradicated. In other words, the constitution is being made more bureaucratic and less democratic. Such constitutional amendments should not in any event be made in a hurry. Sometimes sobriety and the interests of progress do require deliberate, and not hasty, steps.

This is not saying that the constitution of a country must be rigid, inflexible and incapable of being adapted to the needs of the time, but if needs of the time mean the needs of the people, as it should, any constitutional change should be brought about after consulting those very interests which have a stake in social progress, namely, the toilers and the disinherited. It is their interests which are supreme and any proposed change should be tested by whether they will enable the poor, the hungry and those who work and produce goods but have so long been expropriated, to advance their well-being and to rise to positions of authority in the state. If any change is made which does not conform to this standard, such a change is open to the charge of not being *bona fide*.

ARUN PROKAS CHATTERJEE

¹ AIR 1974 SC 2192 (para 88).

² AIR 1971 SC 1547.

³ AIR 1967 SC 1643.

⁴ *Fundamentals of Soviet State Law*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971.

⁵ AIR 1973 SC 1461.

⁶ (1896) AC 348.

⁷ (1932) AC 304.

⁸ (1937) AC 326.

⁹ (1937) 301 US 548.

¹⁰ (1937) 301 US 619.

¹¹ (1935) AC 500.

¹² G V Plekhanov, *The Development of the Monist View of History*, 1972, 150-51.

¹³ (1803) 1 Cranch 137.

¹⁴ (1955) 349 US 294.

¹⁵ AIR 1971 SC 530.

¹⁶ (1970) 1 SCC 248.

COMMUNICATION

Mao Tse-tung's Contribution to Theory and Tactics of Revolution

IN HIS NOTE under the same title in *Social Scientist* 50 (September 1976) E M S Namboodiripad has taken pains to suggest that "Mao did not have to work out (as Lenin had to) the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution in the world as a whole and in a new epoch of human history. His was the more modest task of applying the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution worked out by the Communist International to the specific conditions of China." Therefore, says E M S, it is not fair to compare Mao's "services to the Chinese revolution with the *monumental work* turned out by Lenin." (Emphasis added.) Yet, through his note E M S draws continued comparison and contrast of Mao with Lenin and Stalin. Indeed he wishes that Mao's stature be redrawn to the Chinese scale.

We wonder why E M S takes up such a crude and irrelevant comparative approach when he himself admits that "the Chinese revolution...provides an exceedingly rewarding lesson for all Marxist-Leninists, particularly in Asia and Africa where conditions are approximately the same." The crucial importance of an agrarian revolution in backward countries was indeed emphasized by the Comintern. But Mao was undoubtedly the pioneer to work out a model through unflinching creative practice, even against occasional contrary advice from the highest levels of international communist leadership.

Further, while we still have no adequate data for a full appraisal of the Chinese cultural revolution, it would not be appropriate only to focus on its reported excesses and distortions. Mao had enough vision and courage to experiment with the idea of a permanent cultural revolution in China, in order to make the path to communism safe and sure with the experience so gathered. This is surely not a modest task on charted lines, nor one to benefit China alone. Chinese experience of the cultural revolution has shown that this is possible without the new society being broken up. Though shaken to its bones more than once, the Chinese society has in fact emerged from the cultural revolution stronger and more confident.

Habit being only second nature, Mao noted that individualism, love of power, bureaucracy, careerism, hedonism and all those undesirable and evil aspects of human behaviour, carried over from past societies, cannot overnight be got rid of, even after a proletarian revolution, merely through administrative-legislative measures. Their myriad roots cannot be eradicated through an economic programme alone. More important in this respect is the role of "politics in command" in the form of a mass line which again means a throughgoing cultural revolution: a revolution in human values as such. The headquarters of the new society, and all men in the *apparati* through which the headquarters function, need 'bombardment' from time to time. For they are to be kept under constant pressure of the masses, not only in theory but also in practice. For a correct handling of contradictions, even socialist power needs full exposure, from time to time in a big and demonstrative way, to unrestricted criticism of both the party and non-party rank and file, that is, the masses, so that bureaucratic habits do not get ossified into second nature.

Cults of personality do develop around great leaders of mankind, often in spite of them, particularly in backward societies. To what extent an individual leader himself is responsible for the promotion of such a cult is a matter of judgment in each specific case. In the absence of sufficient information about the day-to-day functioning of the Chinese Communist Party, we feel that it is too early on our part to assess Mao in this respect, as E M S Namboodiripad has unfairly done under the head "Errors and Distortions". The Chinese cultural revolution has, on the whole, emphasized not a person, but certain human values and a method to inculcate them. The concept of cultural revolution also involves extension of the same revolution against its own distortions, if any. This is how Mao's concept of cultural revolution, stemming from the concrete experiences of the relevant epoch as well as cautions of classical Marxism, is valid not only for China but also for other socialist societies though the actual course of revolution may differ from country to country, according to the given specifics. Such a proposition of particularity would be equally true of Lenin's theories in their relevant context, and no one emphasized it more than Lenin himself.

AMIYA K BAGCHI
BARUN DE
AMALENDU GUHA
ASOK SEN

BOOK REVIEW

T N SINDHWANI, *ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY OF AN ASIAN COMMON MARKET*, A STUDY OF THE ESCAP REGION, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1975, 230 pp, Rs 50.

FOR ANY serious discussion dealing with the complex processes of integration, especially among developing countries, it is essential that a distinction be drawn between the content of economic integration and its outward superficial appearance. This is so not for the simple reason that the integrating countries do not all belong to a given socioeconomic system, each country being rather circumscribed by specific features and trends produced by the concrete historical conditions of its development. Most discussions regarding economic integration which rely on quantitative indices (such as per capita income, industrial production, or exports) alone, have implicit in them a particular view of economic development which totally ignores qualitative aspects: the possibilities of popular participation in meaningful economic activity organized for the satisfaction of the material needs of not a few, but all citizens.

Sindhwani's quantitative study of the economic feasibility of an Asian common market for the region covered by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) starts with the observation: "A viable political unit of yesterday may have to compromise its political ambitions due to economic necessity and dependence on other countries for raw materials and/or market for its finished products."

The introduction deals with a historical background of the free trade movement delineating the transition from the phase of economic nationalism in which each country pursued the "mirage of self-sufficiency" to one in which the principle of international division of labour and specialization on the basis of favourable factor endowments assumed sway. "One of the main reasons for the early and easy adoption of liberal economic policies in Great Britain was the fact that England was the

only industrialized country in the world at that time and there was little need for protecting the home market."

However, the increasing industrialization of Europe by the close of the nineteenth century and the invasion of the European markets by cheap American corn led to protectionist tendencies on the continent, and in Britain tariff reforms and restrictive measure were adopted to safeguard British manufactures against foreign competition. Protectionism continued in varying degrees right upto the Second World War since when "the countries of western Europe have increasingly come to realize the economic and other advantages of removing the barriers between them and of making a joint approach to common problems."

He then briefly surveys the advent of various regional economic communities such as the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), Benelux Economic Union, European Free trade Association (EFTA) the European Common Market (ECM), Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) and so on.

Trade Patterns

Chapter 2 surveys the Asian scene. There is classification of principal exports and imports of member countries and it is observed, "No country seems to be a major exporter of more than three or four products in the region nor does any one single commodity account for major export earnings in more than three or four countries."

From this it is argued that the great diversity in natural resources and agricultural production in this region "may have contributed towards the relatively higher percentage of intra-regional trade in the ESCAP region as compared with the other developing regions of the world."

It is at the same time also observed that "the expansion of the ESCAP region's intra-regional trade was mainly due to trade expansion between the developing and developed ESCAP countries, and not because of trade expansion among the developing ESCAP countries."

In chapter 3 we are provided with "a detailed economic survey of the ESCAP region member countries" a documentation of certain key indices such as gross national product, gross domestic product, per capita income, export performance, industrial output, agricultural production (separately for principal crops) population and a paragraph or two on import policy and tariff systems in each of the thirty-one countries and a small section at the end on intra-regional investments, revenue from tax and import duty. This survey is supposed to highlight "the area of economic cooperation and complementarity"

In the following chapter we come across natural and man-made barriers that separate the economies of ESCAP members. Because of the imperative need for revenues to meet investment demands of their development plans, customs duties occupy an important place. ("and are

set at rather high levels") which act as barriers to intra-regional trade. Furthermore many countries in this region follow protectionist (by providing import tariff, subsidies or quotas and often quantitative restrictions) and import-substitution policies (because of programmes aimed at greater self-sufficiency) as a result of which not only are barriers to intra-regional trade reinforced but "the entire economy is thus converted into a high-cost economy, so that exports not only of manufactured goods but also of traditional products are adversely affected."

We are subsequently provided with a list of production constraints in intra-regional trade. These include scarcity of development resources, trained manpower, increase in the domestic demand of export items, financial constraints, lack of intra-regional transport facilities, economic information and the like. The main point is that due to historical reasons there is a lack of "regionalism" in the Asian and south-east Asian countries. "While historic apathy influenced the trade policies even in learned circles it was (and is) often assumed that there is 'nothing to trade' with other regional member countries and hence little effort is made to explore the possible economic co-operation opportunities."

The next chapter examines the successes and failures of the already established regional institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Institute of Economic Development and Planning, Asian Industrial Development Council, Asian Trade Expansion and Monetary Cooperation and also the sub-regional associations such as the Colombo Plan, Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), and Asian Reserve Bank. The main conclusion that emerges is that "regional cooperation has so far proven most successful where it has been limited to projects involving technical developments with a minimum of economic policy implication ...but rarely and unfortunately in implementation of projects involving important regional economic policy matters."

Integration of What and for Whom?

The final chapter discusses the prospects of economic cooperation in the ESCAP region. The central theme of the argument is that the widening of the market brought about by the freeing of tariff and quota restrictions on trade within the region (these barriers, it is argued, should not be immediately abolished but only in a phased manner) permits higher levels of regional output at lower real production costs.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of Sindhvani's study is the complete absence of a comprehensive approach to analysis of the driving forces of the integration process. His work does not examine the whole range of causes and stimuli of economic integration in all their complex variety, interdependence and contradictoriness, but only some of them, the economic or the political, the social or the technical and industrial. There is no attempt at distinguishing between the main types of integration process—the socialist, the capitalist and that of the developing

countries—and their lessons and experiences. The logical conclusion seems to be that integration is possible between countries with different socio-economic conditions and systems of development and it is not difficult to see how far such a view is from the theory of convergence propagated by certain bourgeois economists.

In perspective, the causes of capitalist integration are inseparable from the economic and political conditions of the development of monopoly capitalism. The shrinking territorial sphere of direct imperialist rule, the emergence of the socialist countries in the world market and the achievement of political independence by the developing countries have sharply limited the geographical framework within which monopolies can carry on economic expansion. At the same time there has been a sharp intensification of the competitive struggle between the monopolies of different countries for markets and spheres of influence. The new conditions of the world capitalist market and international competition have necessitated a process of adjustment on the part of the monopolies, the essential features of which are an acceleration of capital accumulation through mergers and takeovers, formation of transnational monopolies (concentrated chiefly in manufacturing industries) and the increasing interlocking of banking and industrial capital of different countries leading to the development of international finance capital. The intensification of the process of socialization of production both on a national and an international scale have necessitated that monopolies—industrial and banking, national and transnational—adapt themselves to changing social production relations through their international activities directed at capturing spheres of influence, markets, economic territories and hence objectively stimulate the integration of various national markets.

Corporate Integration, Regional Fragmentation

The real content of the integration process depends not only upon development of the productive forces but also on the mode of production, and the relations that develop between people in the process of production. Therefore the character of economic integration is different in conditions of capitalism and socialism.

The nature of the processes of integration in between developing countries cannot be understood except in the context of their relations with the imperialist countries. As a result of the distorted structure of the economy inherited from the colonial system of oppression the trade and other economic links between the newly independent countries are extremely weak even in the immediate geographical area. Furthermore, the special position of the developing countries in the system of world capitalist economy (with their continuing dependence on the former colonial and other imperialist powers) has made it virtually impossible to realize the various economies, brought about by freeing the movement of goods,

labour and capital between them which traditional neo-classical economics speaks of. In fact one can argue that the existing institutions of resource allocation in these countries will tend to inhibit the realization of such economies even in the event of a liberalization of trade and factor movements.

The operations of multinational corporations which essentially integrate, both vertically and horizontally, activities involving segments of the economies of a large number of different countries within the frontiers of a single decision-making machinery, may tend to conceal the extent to which one developing country participates in the development of another. For example, resources of one region may reach the other in a more finished form via processing plants in an advanced capitalist country. However, it is clear that, as Girvan and Jefferson observe, "Intra-corporate commodity transfers between plants located within different countries may satisfy the formal criteria of international trade but so far as resource allocation is concerned, the flows are of an internal character within frontiers which are institutionally, not politically defined."¹ Moreover to the extent that there exists a certain rigidity in product and factor flows between multinationals producing similar sets of commodities, "corporate integration can, and often does, result in regional fragmentation."²

This is not to deny that, as the national economies of the developing countries make progress and strengthen through appropriate socio-economic transformations, they stand to gain from integration with one another. But the strivings of monopoly capital, to play the leading role of 'integrator' of the developing countries, and to use regional integration to subordinate them to the interests of extending and consolidating foreign capital in the integrating associations, are clearly observable tendencies representative of neocolonial policies being pursued by contemporary capitalism and should not be considered lightly.

Sindhwani's study has neglected the analysis of the role of production relations and mode in shaping the motive forces behind economic integration. It does not go beyond classic bourgeois ideas about the international division of labour and foreign trade, regarding the capitalist market as a "self-adjusting process" developing purely under the influence of elemental forces of competition. This study which is purely empirical in nature, does not distinguish between the impulses for economic integration in different socioeconomic systems, leave alone its specific concrete causes in the developing countries.

ANIL RAI

¹ N Girvan and O Jefferson, "Corporate v. Caribbean Integration", in H Bernstein (ed.) *Underdevelopment and Development: The Third World Today*, Penguin, 1973, p 351.

² Ibid.

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*Articles and review article express the views of the authors and not necessarily
of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.*

CONTRIBUTORS

ANIS ALAM is a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Sussex, England.

DAVID ARNOLD is Research officer at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

ANIL BARAN RAY is Reader, Department of Political Science, University of Burdwan, West Bengal.

N RAM is Associate Editor of *The Hindu*, Madras.

EDITOR'S NOTE

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M ANIS ALAM

Imperialism and Science

SCIENCE, said Mao, is the crystallization of knowledge developed through man's struggle for production. Throughout history people have developed science by collecting, systematizing, analysing and generalizing their struggles for increased production.¹ But increasingly, and especially from the seventeenth century onwards, the word 'science'² and the expression 'scientific knowledge' have come to be reserved for that body of knowledge and skills whose development is associated with the names of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Boyle, Harvey, Faraday, Darwin, Einstein, Heisenberg, Bohr and Rutherford. When one thinks of science, one thinks of steam engines, electricity, atom bombs, computers, sputniks and genetic engineering. This science has developed along with the rise of capitalism. In fact the title 'science' has been exclusively reserved for that knowledge and those skills which can be systematized and incorporated into the academic culture of the ruling capitalist class.³ All other knowledge and skills that belonged to the popular culture, and which have accumulated over centuries of careful and selective observations and practice, have been denigrated and labelled unscientific. Third world countries came into contact with this science through imperialist expansion, plunder and colonization. With the establishment of imperial hegemony over the third world by the end of the nineteenth century,

popular local knowledge and skills suffered an eclipse. They were declared unscientific and denied encouragement and support of any kind by the imperialist rulers. Even after gaining formal independence the rulers in the third world continue to follow the imperialist in denying state patronage to local popular knowledge and skills. Thus allopathy, which relies heavily on synthetic drugs, is considered scientific, is taught in universities, is practised in government hospitals and receives research grants from the state. On the other hand, plant medicine, which relies on vast stores of knowledge accumulated over centuries of observation and practice is declared unscientific and is condemned by the medical profession. It does not command government support for research and development. Numerous other examples can be given from the popular practice of agriculture, animal husbandry and weather forecasting. Thus in the third world it is only capitalist science which receives state support, and is taught and researched in universities, laboratories and other establishments. The title of science in the third world is reserved for that knowledge and those skills which can be incorporated and integrated into the capitalist relations of production, and which is of value and use to the world capitalist system.

According to Scheffler: "A fundamental feature of science is its ideal of objectivity, an ideal that subjects all scientific statements to the test of impartial criteria, recognising no authority of persons in the realm of cognition."⁴ Sharing the same viewpoint J Monod, the French biologist and Nobel laureate, writes: "Science rests upon a strictly objective approach to the analysis and interpretation of the universe, including Man himself and the human societies. Science ignores and must ignore value judgements."⁵ But this commonly held view has come to be increasingly challenged, even by bourgeois philosophers of science. In 1962 Thomas Kuhn launched his controversial attack on the conventional wisdom, popularized in the writings of Popper, that science progresses cumulatively towards an ever greater understanding of physical reality, step by step, guided by logic and the appeal to a theory-independent empirical basis. Kuhn divides science into two types: normal science and revolutionary science. Normal science consists of the articulation of the paradigm⁶ to which the scientific community is committed. "Scientific revolutions are non-cumulative episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one."⁷ As subjective, personal and partisan considerations play a decisive role in the acceptance of a new paradigm, science can hardly be said to be an objective, neutral and value-free activity. In fact the metaphysical position of the scientist affects the form that scientific theories take — they are 'régulative principles' which reflect a view of nature.

In western Europe, ever since the seventeenth century, the central paradigm of science has been provided by the *mechanical philosophy*. In the seventeenth century it achieved a clearcut victory over its rival

Aristotelian, magical animistic, alchemical, hermiticist and other images of nature—for this philosophy alone offered the prospect of, and served to legitimate, human (read rising capitalist class) control of and power over the natural world. It was the mechanical philosophy alone that declared the entire universe to be in principle raw material for the benefit of *homo faber* (read capitalist class). Conversely, it was the mechanical philosophy's image of nature that capitalist relations of production in turn reinforced—and eventually established—as the only rational image of nature. This mechanical philosophy has remained unaltered in its essence, although its form has changed with time. It is the basis of present day 'physicalist reductionism' which attempts to 'explain' all phenomena, whether physical, biological or human and social, in terms of physics and chemistry, that is to reduce all phenomena to their 'basic' physical properties 'in terms of the properties of the 'ultimate' constituents of matter, the so-called elementary particles. All phenomena which do not fit into the physical-reductionist scheme are regarded as unnecessary irritants, which scientists could do without. Thus J Monod writes: "We might say, the existence of a living being (an organism with sentience, perception, cognition, consciousness) is a constant challenge and a menace to the postulate of objectivity"—a line of reasoning which would make living beings a challenge and a menace to the development of science.⁸ This science, then, with its objectivity and rationality, both represents and reflects the point of view of the ruling capitalist class which regards the natural world as consisting of raw material, in part immensely complex raw material (namely working-class men and women) but raw material nonetheless, to be used in production for its own benefit.

Science is now firmly and overwhelmingly integrated into the capitalist relations of production. Practically all science is now done under capitalist state patronage or in the laboratories run by big capitalist firms. Most science is goal oriented, being geared to two broad areas of social existence: *production and social control*. Production science is science for profit, science for the accumulation of capital, and is concerned with developing industrial capacity, exploiting new materials and increasing profitability. Social control science takes two forms: it concerns itself with either defence against potential external enemies, or the development of techniques for the pacification, manipulation and control of the indigenous population. If one examines the annual 'science budgets' of Britain or the United States, one finds that between 75 and 90 percent of the annual total comes under these two heads (77 percent in Britain in 1974-75, 80 percent in the US in the fiscal year 1975).⁹ A recent book, *The Technology of Political Control*, documents the development of the science of control in great detail.¹⁰ It is industrialized, militarized and bureaucratized science which is being developed and practised in the advanced capitalist countries, and it is this science

which third world countries are being encouraged to adopt.

Social Function of the Scientist

Scientists are projected as egalitarian, tolerant, open minded, predisposed to collaborate across intimidating social barriers, emotionally detached and supremely rational. Not only is their community a model of international cooperation, but also of internal political organization.¹¹ This image of scientists as competent experts, who are politically neutral, helps the ruling class to institute new forms of oppression and exploitation (or old forms under new conditions), and to make them acceptable in the name of science and under the authority of scientists. William Shockley, 1956 Nobel Prize winner, co-inventor of the transistor, now uses his expertise (in transistor physics!) to further the cause of modern genetic racism in the US. The Pentagon was able to obtain the services of forty-seven of the most eminent American scientists, including five Nobel laureates in physics (E P Wigner, M Gellmann, C Townes, L Alvarez and D Glaser) to work for the Institute of Defence Analysis (IDA). They were organized in the Jason division.¹² Every summer (from 1960 onwards) they met to devise methods to wound, mutilate or kill the maximum number of civilians without employing strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. The committee finally came up with the 'electronic battlefield' which consists of night-vision systems, accoustical detectors, emitters and receivers linked with computers located far away from the battlefield which could trigger bombing raids with laser guided bombs, pellet bombs and defolients. This electronic battlefield was deployed extensively in Indo-China to mutilate, maim and kill.

Science and Industrialization

The movement of capitalism and science are related; though much too intimately for that relationship to be expressed in simple terms of cause and effect. It can, however, be said that at the beginning of the period the economic factor was dominant. It was the conditions of the rise of capitalism that made that of experimental science possible and necessary. Towards the end of the period the reverse effect was beginning to be felt. The practical successes of science were already contributing to the next great technical advance—the Industrial Revolution.¹³

Behind our Industrial Revolution there lies this concentration on the colonial and 'underdeveloped' markets overseas, the successful battle to deny them to anyone else... Our industrial economy grew out of our commerce, and especially our commerce with the underdeveloped world...¹⁴

In the early period of the Industrial Revolution most of the inventions and devices were not the result of conscious application of

science, but were the work of people engaged in struggles for improvements in production techniques. But this situation changed drastically in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Braverman describes this beautifully:

Science is the last—and after labour the most important—social property to be turned into an adjunct of capital. The story of its conversion from the province of amateurs, ‘philosophers’, tinkerers and seekers of knowledge to its present highly organised and lavishly financed state is largely the story of its incorporation into the capitalist firm and subsidiary organisations. At first science costs the capitalist nothing, since he merely exploits the accumulated knowledge of the physical sciences, but later the capitalist systematically organises and harnesses science, paying for scientific education, research, laboratories, etc., out of the huge surplus social product which either belongs to him or which the capitalist class as a whole controls in the form of tax revenue. A formerly relatively free-floating social endeavour is integrated into production and the market.¹⁵

From being a ‘generalized social product incidental to production’ science became ‘capitalist property at the very centre of production.’

The old epoch of industry gave way to the new during the last decades of the nineteenth century chiefly as a result of advances in four fields: electricity, steel, coal, petroleum and the internal combustion engine. Scientific research along theoretical lines played a sufficiently important role in these areas to demonstrate to the capitalist class, and especially to the giant corporate entities then coming into being, its importance as a means of furthering the accumulation of capital. This was true particularly of the electrical industry which was entirely the product of nineteenth century science, and the chemical industry based upon the synthetic products of coal and oil. German capitalists, late-comers in the industrialization of Europe, were the first to incorporate science into industry from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. Their model was to be followed by the rest of the capitalist world and by the end of the nineteenth century scientific industrial research was firmly established. The corporate research laboratories of the United States of America coincided more or less with the era of monopoly capitalism.

The era in which science was beginning to be incorporated into capitalist production overlaps considerably with the rise of modern imperialism. In the period 1876 to 1914 six European capitalist nations increased their colonial possessions by about twenty-five million square kilometres; an area which is one and a half times the area of these six countries put together. In 1876 three countries (Germany, the US and Japan) had no colonies of their own. By 1914 these three countries, together with France, which had hardly any colonies in 1876, had a

colonial empire stretching over an area of more than fourteen million square kilometres.¹⁴ The impetus for this imperial expansion was the need to divide the entire globe into captive markets and to capture sources of raw materials for rapidly rising industrial production, made possible by new scientific discoveries.

In the nineteenth century, Britain was the largest imperialist power. Her colonial empire was spread over the five seas. In order to establish and maintain British naval and imperial hegemony through a global network of harbours, the sciences of meteorology, oceanography and naval astronomy were developed. Similarly, the agricultural and mineral sciences were developed greatly to exploit the agricultural and mineral resources of the colonies. From the eighteenth century onwards there had been a large scale expansion of plantation industries in the colonies. New plants and crops were introduced into entirely different surroundings. New soil conditions, new pests, new weather conditions and their mutual relationships were from the very beginning studied scientifically.

The Rise of Imperialism

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the exploitation of the colonies entered a second phase. In addition to the exploitation by the mercantile and industrial capital of the colonial powers, the colonies were subjected to exploitation by finance capital as well. A large number of companies dealing with the transport, mining and plantation industries began to invest in the colonies. In India the largest and economically the most profitable investments, in railways, shipping and tea plantations, grew very rapidly after the 1870s, necessitating the development of scientific and technical expertise. The colonial government therefore encouraged the development of scientific and technical education, and research institutions were established on a considerable scale. By the end of the nineteenth century there were 170 colleges affiliated to five universities at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Delhi. These included several medical and engineering colleges. The colonial government also established ten scientific services in India (the Meteorological Reporter, the Inspector General of the Civil Veterinary Department, the Director of the Botanical Survey of India, the Reporter on Economic Products, the Inspector General of Agriculture, the Director General of Archaeology, the Chief Inspector of Mines, the Surveyor General, the Inspector General of Forests and the Director of the Geological Survey).¹⁷ In addition, two agencies were exclusively created in British India (the Indian Advisory Committee (IAC) of the British Royal Society and the Board of Scientific Advice of the Government of India) for the specific purpose of using 'science, including medical science to explore and exploit the geography and natural resources of the colonies in general and the Indian sub-continent in

particular, for the benefit of British commerce.¹⁸

A colonial official has commented that the huge empire of Britain was kept together (in part by concession, in part by force, and in part by the constant intervention of new scientific forces to deal with the growing difficulties of imperial rule.¹⁹

Science for Underdevelopment

Today it is the local education system which sorts out and selects the best brains to be given the necessary basic training. Indeed, third world countries have received a large amount of aid, in the form of equipment, finance, technical assistance and training programmes, to enable them to set up sophisticated training and research institutes in the sciences. Advisers from the advanced capitalist countries ensure that the standards of research and teaching are equivalent to those of the metropolitan institutions. The best students are then brought over to the advanced capitalist countries for further training in highly-specialized fields; after which, of course, they seem over-qualified for their own little underdeveloped countries. In 1970 there were more than 100,000 foreign students in the USA, 50,000 in West Germany, and about the same number in France, from the third world. Various capitalist countries offered more than 100,000 scholarships to students from the third world.

Many of those who return to their native countries become frustrated through the lack of the institutional facilities for higher research they had become accustomed to during their stay abroad. As a result they return to the advanced capitalist countries. Those who remain introduce and reinforce an elitist, hierarchical and expert science which perpetuates and reproduces the same exploitative system as before.

Take the case of India. In 1947 there were eighteen universities with about 300,000 students. In addition there were a number of well-established institutes undertaking research in agriculture, medicine, geology, mining, and so on. India also possessed a number of institutions such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR); the Indian Science Congress (1914), the Indian Academy of Sciences (1934), the Indian Institute of Sciences (1935) and the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) founded in 1942.

In the twenty-five years following independence, over seventy new universities and research laboratories have been established. The number of students has shot up to nearly three million. Nine institutes of technology have been set up, modelled upon the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In addition specialized research institutes, like the Forest Research Institute, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Atomic Energy Establishment, Indian Cancer Institute, national laboratories and central research institutes, have been established to undertake research on food, drugs and technology. In 1973 Indian universities awarded more than 1,803 Ph Ds 35,000 M Scs and 80,000 B Scs in

various branches of science.²⁰ India has been spending 2.6 percent of her GNP, and more than 23 percent of all public expenditure, on education. In 1972 India spent more than 200,000 million rupees on research and development. In 1973 about 1,174,300 scientists and engineers were working in India, of whom 96,954 were engaged in research and development. The expenditure on education has increased from 6,104 million in 1965 to 13,575 million in 1973.²¹ Indian science has certainly developed, and is impressive by any standards. Indian scientists have been awarded Nobel prizes and their articles are published by practically every scientific journal in the capitalist world; they have successfully exploded an atomic device and they have sent a satellite into the sky. Every year several local, regional and international conferences, congresses and symposia are held in India. Indian scientists are found all over the world in the most prestigious universities and research institutes.

Distribution of Benefits

But who has benefited from all this expenditure and development. Has it reduced poverty, malnutrition, disease and unemployment in the country? Let us look at the statistics. In a recent study Romesh Diwan shows that "the percentage of rural people below the minimum standard of living has significantly gone up from 38 percent of the total population in 1960-61 to 54 percent in 1968-69".²² And yet, according to a spokesman of the Congress Party, which ruled India from 1947 until its defeat in 1977, "there has been more scientific progress and achievements in India during the last ten years 1965-75 than perhaps in the previous century".²³ Whom did this progress benefit? According to Sau this period also saw a phenomenal rise in the fortunes of Indian big business.²⁴ He finds that medium and large public limited companies had more than doubled their assets in the eight years, 1967-68 to 1974-75. The bigger companies did even better. The total assets of twenty celebrated big business houses (Birlas, Tatas, Mafatlals and so on increased from Rs 20,800 million to Rs 35,150 million in six years (1966-67-1972-73), and then to Rs 51,100 million by 1975-76, that is an increase of Rs 15,950 million in just three years. The profits of medium and large companies rose from Rs 6,600 million to Rs 16,800 million in eight years (1966-67—1974-75) a compound growth rate of 11.33 percent for gross profit. The twenty big business houses increased their gross profit in three years (1972-73—1975-76) by a stupendous 57.8 percent, from Rs 3,800 million to Rs 6,000 million! The biggest two, Tatas and Birlas, registered the maximum increase. Tatas increased its assets from Rs 3,650 million in 1963-64 to Rs 9,746 million in 1975-76; Birlas from Rs 2,829 million to Rs 10,646 million during the same period. Throughout the whole of this period wages remained more or less stagnant.

The development of prestigious branches of science like nuclear,

particle, solid state and space physics, though of little value to the average Indian, has been of great benefit to the Indian ruling classes. A sophisticated armaments industry has been developed—enabling the ruling class to pursue an expansionist foreign policy. The explosion of an atomic device and the launching of a space satellite in the middle of the 1970s has brought further prestige to the Indian bourgeoisies and helped divert attention from their internal exploitative policies. In short although the development of science in India has not relieved the misery of the average Indian, it has greatly increased the fortunes of the ruling classes (big business, rich landowners and the middle class). It has also provided them with new and more efficient instruments of repression.

But the biggest beneficiaries of all have been the imperialist countries themselves. For, if hitherto third world countries have been the source of raw materials and of unskilled and semi-skilled manpower, today they are also being used as a huge reservoir of cheap scientific labour power. In fact — as we would expect — the closer the links and the greater the 'aid' between a third world country and the metropolis, the greater the drain of scientific and technical manpower. Thus the Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore are the largest suppliers (per number of emigrants per thousand of population) of qualified scientific manpower to the US. They are also the largest recipients of US aid (scientific and technical expertise, grants and military assistance). A recent United Nations study has documented the benefits to the US from this inflow of scientists, engineers, physicians and surgeons. The study shows that during the decade 1961-71, over 53,000 scientists, engineers, physicians and surgeons came to the US from the third world. Indeed, during 1965-70, of the net addition to the employment of scientists and engineers in the US more than 20 percent came from abroad, and in recent years these immigrants are coming increasingly from the underdeveloped third world countries. The study further points out that in 1970 alone the amount added to the US national income through the services of immigrant scientists comes to about US \$ 3.7 billion. In comparison the figure for the US official development assistance to the third world in the same year was US \$ 3.1 billion. It may be interesting to note that the contribution to immigrant scientific manpower is equal to 0.3 percent of the US gross domestic product, nearly 14 percent of total US expenditure on research and development, and about 39 percent of US current expenditure on higher education.²⁵

Scientific Agriculture and the Third World

Hunger and insufficient agricultural production are two of the chronic problems facing most of the third world. The advanced capitalist countries have encouraged third world countries to adopt their scientific methods and practices in agriculture. It is claimed that by doing so they could increase their agricultural production considerably.

But before examining the benefits to third world countries of the adoption of scientific agricultural practices, let us look at the consequences of scientific agriculture in one of the earliest capitalist countries, the United Kingdom. In his book *Energy and Food Production*²⁶, Gerald Leach examines the requirements of food production in societies ranging from the most primitive to modern capitalist industrial states. Leach exposes some of the absurdities of the food production system in Britain. He finds that the application of science does not increase food production per acre, though it does increase productivity per man by the use of agricultural machinery, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It is extremely wasteful of energy in the form of fossil fuels (used for raw materials for fertilizers, pesticides and as fuel for agricultural machinery). If the third world countries were to use the scientific agricultural practices of advanced capitalist countries like the UK, they would consume their entire yearly energy supply on growing food alone. And if they wanted to use the scientific processing techniques used in the UK, they would also require an amount of energy equal to 40 percent of the entire energy consumption of the whole world. Leach further claims that the *proportion of the work-time spent in feeding the UK population is comparable to that in primitive communities using pre-capitalist science.*

On the face of it, it looks as if the use of scientific methods enables one farmer to feed sixty or more people. But these methods depend on, have allowed, and indeed largely caused, vast social changes—including urbanization and the factory system—which have put large distances between the fields and the mouths in every sense, and greatly swelled the ranks of non-farm workers in food production and distribution. Thus in the UK one worker is able to feed only 14-16 people—a figure which is typical of the middle to upper range for pre-industrial farming, when one counts the working time actually spent in production.

Although scientific agricultural practices are of questionable value, even in the UK and the US, still there has been a conscious effort to foster them in the third world. The big American foundations (Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie), along with the US Department of Agriculture and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), have been responsible for the so-called revolution in agriculture—the Green Revolution—that some third world countries have experienced since the 1960s. In fact the high-yielding varieties of wheat and maize were developed at the International Wheat and Maize Improvement Centre in Mexico, which was set up by the Rockefeller Foundation with American expertise and capital. Similarly, an improved variety of rice was developed at the International Rice Research Institute, set up jointly by the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundations at Manila in 1962. And at these centres were schooled the agronomists and economists who would help 'mould the rural economy into forms compatible with technological change and social stability.'²⁷

From 1952 onwards—under a technical collaboration programme with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Ministry of Education—USAID provided the experts, equipment and capital required to set up nine agricultural universities.²⁸ Six American universities (Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Pennsylvania and Tennessee) collaborated in this project, sending 300 of their staff members to serve in India, and training about a thousand Indians in the agricultural sciences.²⁹ The programme, which was phased out in 1972-73, introduced capitalist agricultural practices to India in a big way, and vastly increased the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and agricultural machinery. The class of big landlords and rich peasants who alone could make use of these expensive techniques were able to reduce farm labour and increase their profits greatly. Consequently, inequalities in the Indian rural areas have increased, rural unemployment has risen, but the increase in agricultural yields has not been better than that of the prescientific agricultural era. According to Dasgupta, in the ten-year period 1966-76 "the rate of growth in food production, at 2.5 percent a year was less than the pre - high yielding varieties period with a less advanced technology."³⁰

The officials of the agribusiness monopolies, however, acknowledge the role played by the US government in opening up third world markets for them. One executive of a giant fertilizer company told a Congressional Committee:

I must emphasise that there would be scarcely any investment if it were not for the infrastructure, the education, the training and the support provided by our (US government) aid programme. We certainly would not be in India and very few investors would be in any of the underdeveloped countries were it not for our efforts at economic assistance.³¹

By the 1960s the World Bank entered the field on the premise that what the underdeveloped world needed was agriculture. And what agriculture needed was science. And science could be bought from the firms that sold it—agribusiness firms, multinational corporations—at a price. The World Bank provided the money. In the period 1964-68 it lent \$872million to third world agriculture—roughly the same sum that it had loaned in the entire 1948—63 period. Its lending rose again precipitously to US \$3.1 billion in 1969-73. And in 1973-74 alone credits amounted to US\$956million, plus \$294million extended to agricultural industries. McNamara, the Bank's President, promised to commit \$7 billion more for agriculture in the third world for the period 1976-80. Lending also rose in relative terms. In 1974-75 agricultural lending was about 40 percent of total lending, as against 15 percent in 1964-68, and 23 percent in 1969-73.³²

Thus, the massive financing provided by the World Bank and directed towards schemes which facilitate the use of (advanced)

large-scale scientific methods in agriculture, develops a fertile and highly profitable field for agribusiness to operate in and creates a ready-made market for its products. But, as we have seen in the case of India, use of these methods increases unemployment and inequality without increasing the amount of food produced. Moreover, such technologies are wasteful of energy (which most of the third world is deficient in) and increase dependence on the advanced capitalist countries for the very techniques which impoverish third world countries still further. Traditional ways of planting, fertilizing, harvesting and caring for the earth are replaced by the use of expensive imported chemical products. And the use of these products has in turn exhausted and impoverished the soil.⁸⁸

The lesser beneficiaries of the World Bank's largesse are a handful of rich landowners in the third world. But the greater beneficiaries are the makers of farm equipment, fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. The World Bank might as well have handed over its money to the multinational corporations direct and saved third world countries from further distortions in their economies and further ransoms on their future.

¹ See J D Bernal, *Science in History*, 3rd ed London 1965 and J Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Cambridge 1956-65.

² Science means not only the so-called pure sciences (physics, chemistry, biology), but also applied sciences (agriculture, medicine, engineering).

³ A Gorz, 'On the Class Character of Science and Scientists', H Rose and S Rose (eds) *The Political Economy of Science*, London 1976.

⁴ I Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity*, Chicago 1967.

⁵ Paradigms are the generally accepted fundamental beliefs about a particular phenomenon which describe its nature, explain experimental relations and define further areas of investigation which can proceed without challenging the basic hypotheses.

⁶ J Monod, 'On the Logical Relationship between Knowledge and Values' in W Fuller (ed) *The Social Impact of Modern Biology*, London 1971.

⁷ T Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, 1962.

⁸ Quoted in B Easlea 'Scientific Knowledge and a Livable World' University of Sussex, December 1975 (unpublished paper).

⁹ 'The Incorporation of Science' in *The Political Economy of Science*, op. cit.

¹⁰ C Ackroyd, K Margolis, J Rosenhead and T Shallice, *The Technology of Political Control*, Harmondsworth, 1977.

¹¹ R K Merton, 'The Institutional Imperatives of Science' B Barnes (ed) *Sociology of Science*, Harmondsworth 1977.

¹² *Science for the People*, Vol 4 numbers 5 and 6, September-November 1972.

¹³ J D Bernal, op. cit.

¹⁴ E J Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, Harmondsworth 1969.

¹⁵ H Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, Monthly Review Press, New York 1974.

¹⁶ V I Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow 1967.

¹⁷ R M Macleod 'Scientific Advice for British India: Imperial Perception and Administrative Goals 1898-1923,' *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 9, number 3, 1975.

¹⁸ G Basalla, 'Science and Government in England, 1800-1870' (quoted in R M Macleod, op.cit.)

- 19 W S Blunt, quoted in R M Macleod, op.cit.
- 20 All data from the *Commonwealth University Handbook*, 1976.
- 21 All data from the *UNESCO YEAR BOOK*, 1976.
- 22 Romesh Diwan, 'Development, Education and the Poor' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 12 number 5-9 April 1977.
- 23 Rajni Patel, *The Decade of Scientific Progress*, Bombay, 1976.
- 24 Ranjit Sau, 'Indian Political Economy' 1967-1977, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 12 number 5-9 April 1977.
- 25 U N Report number TD/B/Ac 11/25/Rev 1 1975.
- 26 G Leach, *Energy and Food Production*, London 1975.
- 27 Harry Cleaver, quoted in S George, *How the Other Half Dies*, Harmondsworth, 1976.
- 28 These Universities are: Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana; Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar; University of Udaipur; Agricultural University Pantnagar; M P University of Agriculture, Jabalpur; Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology; Maharashtra University of Agriculture and Technology; Mysore University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore.
- 29 H Read, *Partners with India: Building Agricultural Universities*, Urbana 1974.
- 30 Biplab Dasgupta 'India's Green Revolution' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 12 numbers 6-8 February 1977.
- 31 Quoted in S George, op. cit.
- 32 E Feder 'Capitalism's Last Ditch Effort to Save Underdeveloped Agriculture.' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol 7 number 1 1977.
- 33 For example, some side effects of high-yielding varieties which use increased amounts of water and fertilizer have been the devastation caused by water logging salinity and the development of new weeds and pests.

DAVID ARNOLD

*Labour Relations in a South Indian
Sugar Factory 1937-1939*

INDIA'S transition from colonial rule to self-government is too often presented in terms of constitutional reforms, high level conferences and political personalities. The historiography of the last years of British India has been saturated with accounts of the attitudes and utterances of the politicians and administrators who are presumed to have shaped India's destiny. Almost entirely ignored are the less spectacular, but in a different way no less significant, changes in the sphere of labour relations and management control of the industrial workforce that accompanied the formal constitutional transfer of power. Neo-Marxist scholars, especially those attached to a somewhat Eurocentric theory of underdevelopment, have tended to concentrate their attention on the enduring strength of western capitalism, despite its changing forms and requirements, and on its continuing ability to dominate the political economy of third world countries. In such a schema the national bourgeoisie is all too often assigned a submissive role, the purblind lackey of western economic imperialism, and the attainment of independence is seen as little more than 'flag independence', a convenient substitution of indirect control for outright imperial rule which meant no serious diminution of economic supremacy. The day of the multinational corporations was dawning, and it was (so such a theory seems to run) the

historical function of the governments of the new nation states of the third world to guarantee them a suitable political and economic environment in which to flourish—cheap labour, large markets, vast profits, no strikes or left-wing revolutions.

While, in the final analysis, it may be true that the continuing supremacy of western capitalism has been the dominant feature of mid-twentieth century European decolonization, it would be rash to assume that the transition from colonialism to self-government was a smooth one for European businessmen and industrialists in a country like India. On the contrary, the transitional period was characterized by a series of minor crises. The European companies at times found it hard to adjust to the new regime's labour and industrial policies, or found difficulty in persuading the incoming Congress ministers to espouse their interests during industrial disputes. For their part, the Congress ministers, even if they did not subscribe to the socialist objectives sketched by the resolutions of the 1931 Congress session at Karachi and advocated by the party's left wing, at least felt some obligation to improve the conditions and negotiating position of the industrial workers. Congressmen in office often found themselves torn between the workers, many of whom had voted for (or in other ways identified themselves with) the Congress and who often had the partial support of local party organization, and the industrialists; whose property the ministers felt bound to safeguard, if necessary by resort to the police, prohibitory orders and the courts, from attacks by 'aggressive' strikers. That the European companies generally emerged triumphant from these industrial trials of strength was often indicative of their skill in exploiting the ambiguities and conflicting ambitions of the Congress ministers, in playing upon their fear of revolution from the left, and in urging them to uphold the bias towards property and 'law and order' which had been such a pronounced feature of the British regime in India. Ministerial support for European industrialists was neither automatic nor inevitable; but in the end the pull of capital was greater than the appeal of labour.

This account of industrial conflict at the Nellikuppam sugar factory in South Arcot from 1937 to 1939 tries to show how a European-controlled enterprise—in this case the giant Parry's organization and its subsidiary, East India Distilleries and Sugar Factories—was able to coax the first Congress ministry to hold office in the Madras Presidency largely to take its side during a dispute with the factory's workers. Although the strike at Nellikuppam in April and May 1939 occurred several years before Indian independence and at a time when the powers of the provincial ministries were still restricted by the 1935 Government of India Act, the Nellikuppam story shows how a foreign-controlled company and an Indian government could come to see mutual interests in working together to control a section of India's industrial labour force.

Government Attitudes to Labour

It is first of all necessary to explain the general character of government attitudes to industrial labour disputes before 1937 and then to indicate the extent to which the Madras Congress ministry diverged from its British predecessors.

To their annoyance and at times dismay, European businessmen and industrialists in India had never enjoyed the automatic support and protection of the state to which they felt themselves entitled. Although the British empire in India had grown out of the trading activities of the East India Company, by the late nineteenth century there was a wide gulf between European administrators and European businessmen. The administrators rarely came from manufacturing or commercial families in their own country; their public school and university education blinkered them from the world of trade and industry and encouraged them to despise it; and once established in a predominantly agrarian province like Madras they were far more likely to become experts in land revenue matters or amateur anthropologists of rural castes and tribes than to develop a specialized appreciation of the problems of industrial labour. For most administrators, European businessmen were socially inferior, politically naive, and, in administrative matters, meddlesome. As much from disinterest, therefore, as from attachment to the tenets of *laissez-faire*, until the late 1920s the Government of Madras held that it was not the duty of the state to intervene in the relations between employers and workers. The government clung to this policy of non-intervention despite the presidency's experience of intense labour unrest between 1918 and 1922 and again between 1926 and 1929.

Laissez-faire and general indifference apart, the Madras government saw political wisdom in remaining aloof from postwar labour disputes. In January 1919, for example, it decided not to prosecute certain labour leaders because such a step would "seem definitely to place Government on the side of the capitalist (and European) and against the labour (and Indian.)"² Similarly, in 1921 it opposed the acceptance of rewards offered to the police by the European management of the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras because "local agitators and labour leaders would say the police were taking sides and working for the capitalists... But if the British hoped that such evasive tactics would convince the industrial workers of a genuine impartiality they were mistaken. From 1918 onwards the government was repeatedly drawn into labour disputes when lockouts and strikes exploded into violence: these were now law and order problems in British eyes and the police and magistrates hurriedly intervened, almost invariably to the advantage of the management. Bitter experiences of strikes broken by police lathi-charges and firing soon persuaded industrial workers that the colonial

state, whatever claims might be made on its behalf, was in practice a close ally of the capitalists.

Gradually and reluctantly, the Madras government shuffled towards a more interventionist policy. In 1920 a Commissioner of Labour was appointed, at first merely to inform the government about labour organization and unrest, later to act as a mediator between workers and management. The Government of India's Trade Disputes Act of 1929 authorized the creation of *ad hoc* courts of enquiry to investigate industrial disputes and conciliation boards to try to find solutions acceptable to both sides. But, as labour leaders soon complained, the legislation remained largely inoperative: the onset of the Depression in 1930 forced a decline in labour agitation—employment was now even more precarious than usual and the victimization by employers of known militants correspondingly easier. The provincial administration was, anyway, unenthusiastic about the mediatory rôle assigned to it by the 1929 Act and continued to hope that labour disputes would solve themselves without government intervention.

As Minister for Industries and Labour in the Congress ministry which held office in Madras from July 1937 to October 1939, V V Giri sought to introduce a more energetic and constructive labour policy, largely by exploiting the opportunities created by existing (but neglected) legislation. In 1926 the legal status of trade unions in India had been confirmed by an act of government: Giri was anxious to encourage further unionization and to persuade employers to recognize workers' organizations. This would free workers from the persistent fear of victimization for participation in labour organizations, and, as Giri explained in the Madras Legislative Assembly in March 1938, recognition would enable workers to meet employers "to talk business across the table to redress their grievances and demands." The Minister believed that the establishment of what he termed "healthy" and "responsible" trade unions would bring workers and capitalists together as "partners in industry". Giri was not an advocate of class conflict. On the contrary, he aimed at the harmonious cooperation of both sides. Direct action was, he conceded, a legitimate trade union tactic: during his twenty years as a labour organizer Giri had been involved in many strikes. But now, as a minister, he felt that strikes should be a very last resort and even advised a younger generation of labour leaders "to be strong and tell their comrades that strikes are not desirable."³

A communique issued by the Government of Madras in October 1937 stated that the ministry would "strongly disapprove of any strike when all other methods of representation are not exhausted."⁴ In place of strikes Giri called for negotiation and conciliation. He urged that disputes should be settled internally, between the workers and the management in each factory; but where this failed he felt it the duty of the state to intervene to work out a satisfactory settlement. Giri did this

informally by touring the province, meeting labour leaders, deputations of workers, and management representatives, as well as more formally by directing the Commissioner of Labour to investigate a dispute and putting into operation the provisions of the 1929 Trade Disputes Act. During the first 18 months of the ministry several conciliation boards and courts of enquiry were appointed (usually consisting of a single investigator, such as a judge or a lawyer) to examine evidence submitted by both sides in a dispute. Giri also hoped—the life of the ministry proved too brief for it to be possible—to introduce new legislation that would further strengthen the position of trade unions and detail the procedures to be followed in resolving industrial disputes.

The Polarization within Congress

Well intentioned though Giri's policy undoubtedly was, it was too timid for many workers and for more progressive labour leaders. The advent of the Congress ministry and the appointment for the first time of a Minister for Labour, especially one so long associated with the trade union movement, encouraged a belief that the Congress would introduce a number of substantial reforms, such as improved working conditions, shorter hours, longer holidays and rest breaks, a living wage, and security against wrongful dismissals. It was for such objectives, rather than from nationalist sentiments, that a majority of working class voters had elected Congressmen to the six seats reserved for trade union labour in the Madras Legislative Assembly. Moreover, by 1937 trade and industry in southern India were finally recovering from the effects of the international Depression. Workers now felt more secure, trade unions revived, more militant demands were voiced. In particular, workers wanted the restoration of pay cuts made during the early years of the Depression and management recognition for their trade unions. They were at first delighted by Giri's promise to encourage unionisation, win recognition for the unions, and set up the machinery for the investigation and resolution of disputes. But the attraction of the new policy soon palled. It did not bring the transformation of industrial relations for which many workers hoped, and it was soon being alleged that Giri was far more sympathetic to the management than to the unions.

The workers' disillusionment was encouraged by the rapid polarization of the Congress party between its right and left wings. On the right stood C Rajagopalachari. Before becoming the provincial Premier in July 1937 Rajagopalachari had made it clear in his public statements that he had little sympathy for socialism. Once in office, he revealed the intensity of his opposition to communism, most strikingly in an official press communique issued in August 1938,⁶ and his profound dislike of the trade union movement. He disapproved of collective bargaining, though he accepted that it had become a "necessary evil"; his ministry would not allow aggressive and obstructive picketing outside factories

during strikes.⁶ Although Giri held the labour and industries portfolio, the dominant personality in the ministry was Rajagopalachari — “Dear and Respected Rajaji” as Giri once addressed him during the Nellikuppam crisis⁷ — and it was he, as Premier and minister for the police, who often made the crucial ‘law and order’ decisions during a dispute. As the labour movement intensified during 1938 there was a series of incidents during which the police arrested, lathi charged and shot strikers at Coimbatore, Madurai, Chirāla and other industrial centres. Workers and many local Congressmen were shocked that a Congress ministry should resort to repressive techniques hitherto identified with British tyranny. But, despite the outcry, Rajagopalachari stood firm. According to the Minister for Information, the ministry was simply following “the normal procedure that has to be followed by any Government charged with the maintenance of law and order.”⁸

At the other end of the spectrum were Congress Socialists, men like P Jeevanandam at Nellikuppam, who advised the workers not to give in to, or even compromise with, the management but to hold out for the full redress of their grievances. At one level these political activists were ambitious for a wider struggle, hoping to propel the industrial proletariat towards action of a more revolutionary kind. At another, they were interested in embarrassing the ministers and the established party leadership, so as to demonstrate how little the workers could expect from Rajagopalachari, Giri and their associates. But the socialists were also motivated by a genuine concern for India’s proletariat and they were able to articulate the resentment many workers in the factories felt at the intransigence of their employers and their growing alienation from the Congress leadership. During the Nellikuppam struggles both the management and the ministers blamed radicals and “irresponsible” unionists for “misleading” the workers into strike action over “rash” and “excessive” demands. But it is hard to accept that the workers were quite so gullible. Many at Nellikuppam had been involved in strikes before: they knew the hardships and the risks involved. One can only conclude that they made a rational assessment of their chances of winning (with the presumed support of the Congress ministry’s new labour policy) and were sufficiently angry and determined about their grievances to believe them worth striking for.

In the middle, between the party’s diverging left and right, were many Congressmen who were as yet uncertain where their primary loyalties lay. Among local party activists, committee men, trade union leaders and MLAs there were men and women who saw right and wrong on both sides of the widening political divide and who, in consequence, generally favoured compromise and moderation. To take just one example P R K Sarma had been a labour organizer in the Madras Presidency since the mid-1920s. In 1937 he was elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly on the Congress ticket for a trade union constituency. As a

Congressman, he openly identified himself with the ministerial party and its policies. Speaking in the Budget debate in March 1938, for example, he assured the Assembly that he and the five other labour MLAs were "always willing to follow the labour policy of the present Government", and that their loyalty was to the Congress as much as to the trade unions they represented.⁹ However, by March 1939, after a year of mounting conflict between strikers and the police, Sarma was more equivocal. He praised the ministry for showing greater and more sympathetic interest in labour than previous ministers and executive councillors had done, but he felt aggrieved that Rajagopalachari should welcome the employers' alleged "reasonableness" and "tact" while suggesting that the workers had been largely to blame for strikes and violence. He deplored the "unnecessary and even provoking interference of the police" in recent industrial disputes and condemned the launching of prosecutions against striking and picketing workers. But it was on a conciliatory note that Sarma ended his speech: the ministers had, he believed, "been trying to do their best to help labour", and perhaps "the want of intelligent cooperation on the part of organizations of workers" was as much to blame as the "obstinacy of employers" for disputes getting out of control.¹⁰

One of the 37 labour organizations in which Sarma held honorary or executive office was a union of workers at Parry's Ranipet works. Sarma offended many of the workers there during early 1939 by opposing the amalgamation of all the Parry factory workers into a single organization (perhaps because he had little chance of controlling the amalgamated union) and by working with the ministry to try to thwart strike action. Such was Sarma's unpopularity that on April 24, 1939 the Ranipet Labour Union passed a resolution of no-confidence in him and recommended his dismissal as the union's Honorary President.¹¹ Being an effective labour leader and a loyal Congress MLA were fast becoming incompatible roles.

Parry's and the Nellikuppam Workers

There had been a European-run sugar factory at Nellikuppam since 1845 and a distillery since 1848. In 1897 Parry's set up the East India Distilleries and Sugar Factories Limited to develop their expanding sugar based operations, which were further enlarged in 1902 by the acquisition from Binny's, a rival European giant, of the Deccan Sugar and Abkhari Company. As managing agents for both these concerns, Parry's held a virtual monopoly of commercial sugar processing and distilling in southern India and a solid base for diversification into confectionery, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, fertilisers and even pottery.¹² Nellikuppam was among Parry's most profitable ventures and one of its three main factories, the other two being at Ranipet in neighbouring North Arcot and at Samalkot near Rajahmundry in the Godavari delta.

Despite the factory's rural environs, several miles from the towns of Cuddalore and Pondicherry, the 1,500 workers employed at Nellikuppam were not cut off from the mainstream of labour politics in the province. Like larger industrial centres, the factory had its first taste of protracted labour unrest at the end of the First World War, and a union was formed in 1922. In 1928 Nellikuppam workers assisted railwaymen in obstructing trains near the factory during the South Indian Railway strike, and were successful in winning a series of important concessions from their own management.¹³ In common with labour organizations elsewhere in the province, the Nellikuppam union fell into decline after 1928, and it was not until 1936-37 that a revival began. It was stimulated by the Congress Socialist P Jeevanandam, who visited Nellikuppam several times in 1936, partly to urge the workers to elect suitable candidates to the Assembly in the forthcoming provincial elections, partly to encourage them to form a new, more militant, organization of their own which would press for concessions from, as he put it, the worker's capitalist exploiters.¹⁴ Jeevanandam's efforts soon bore fruit. The Nellikuppam Labour Union was revived in mid-1937, armed with a list of grievances, among them that workers were not given retirement gratuities however long they had worked for Parry's and that skilled labourers and artisans at the factory were paid as little as six and a half to nine annas a day. Workers were also dissatisfied with leave arrangements, service conditions generally and the punishment meted out to them by the management for what they considered minor breaches of factory regulations.¹⁵

Parry's apparent response to the union's revival was to sack nearly a hundred men who had been involved in the union and to threaten to dismiss any others who joined. Following a general meeting of union members on September 13, 1937, the President, M Ratnam Pillai, appealed to Giri to intervene to secure the reinstatement of the dismissed workers and the appointment of a conciliation board to investigate the workers' grievances. Ratnam Pillai admitted that the union had not yet been registered under the Trade Unions Act of 1926, but registration had been applied for.¹⁶ Himself a party activist as well as a union organizer, Ratnam Pillai mobilized the support of local Congress organizations and persuaded several Congress MLAs to sign a petition asking Giri to appoint a conciliation board and to persuade Parry's to re-employ the dismissed men.¹⁷ At this stage, then, it was possible for the workers and unionists at Nellikuppam to invoke the support of the ministerial party to pressurise Parry's to accept the union and consider their demands.

There was an element of duplicity in Parry's response. Once Giri intervened the management promised to reinstate some of the men and to try to reach a compromise agreement over the worker's grievances. One could say that Parry's were more anxious to prevent the appoint-

ment of a conciliation board, which would result in the public discussion of their pay structure, conditions of employment, and perhaps profits, than to reach a settlement themselves which would amount to only marginal concessions to the workers. Parry's were now reaping large profits from their sugar works and, for the sake of a pacified labour force, were prepared to sacrifice a fraction of their gains. One might also say that their response to Giri's intervention was 'essentially a political exercise, intended as much to impress the ministry and the public—Parry's sent a lengthy explanation of their conduct to both Giri and the press—as an attempt to appease the workers. By a display of 'reasonableness' now Parry's might be better placed to win ministerial support against a more determined challenge at a later date. Parry's also took the opportunity to advertise their official policy towards unions. Like most other leading European employers in the province, Parry's had long since recognized that trade unions had a right to exist and begun to see that with careful handling they could be very useful to the management. In this respect European employers were generally more 'progressive' than their Indian counterparts many of whom were still rigidly opposed to unions operating among their employees. In explaining his company's attitude to unions in September 1937, Sir William Wright, Chairman of Parry's Board of Directors, said that recent attempts to form a union at Nellikuppam had not been opposed by the management, rather "we have encouraged registration and offered recognition in order that proper relations might be established." Once the Nellikuppam Labour Union was properly established, Parry's would be willing to recognize and negotiate with it. There had, Wright asserted in contradiction to what the unionists and their supporters had claimed, been no victimization at the factory. The men dismissed had been laid off for quite different reasons, not for their membership of the incipient union.¹⁶

Wright was also an MLA; one of the three elected to represent European commercial, industrial and planting interests in the provincial Assembly, and during the March 1938 Budget debates he elaborated on his view of the role of trade unions. "We have", he said, "no quarrel with the system of collective bargaining. We recognize that it is a feature of the industrial world today which has definitely come to stay..." Far from resenting trade unions among their workforce, Parry's and other European companies welcomed "the existence of such Trade Unions, properly led, inculcated with a full sense of responsibility and capable of maintaining discipline among its [sic] members." Wright accordingly approved the ministry's communique on labour relations issued in October 1937. What he found distressing was not unionism as such but the recent and increasing "lack of discipline in the ranks of labour directed not only against their employers but also against their own Union leaders."¹⁹

What Wright and his European associates sought was basically a well organized, cohesive trade union within each factory, led by men who could formulate and relay the grievances of the workers, who would be willing to discuss these grievances with the management while dissuading the workers, from striking and who would not invoke outside political help. From the management's viewpoint it was futile to deal with 'leaders', only to find an agreement reached with them being repudiated by the workers they claimed to represent. Equally, the management did not want to be suddenly confronted by a strike or by some other labour situation for which they were quite unprepared. Parry's did not, therefore, want mere stooges and management 'yes-men'; but they did require union representatives to be exceptionally patient men. They should be institutionalized safety valves installed in the factory so that labour relations would not overheat and explode like a faulty boiler.

In the language which they used to describe unions and worker-management relations, Giri and Parry's directors often had much in common—the recognition of 'healthy' and 'responsible' trade unions, negotiation and conciliation in place of strikes, industrial "partnership" in place of class warfare. Similarity of language can be deceptive, however, and while Giri was often led to think himself in complete agreement with Parry's, the latter were in practice pursuing a far more intolerant policy, seeking all possible excuses not to negotiate with or recognize a union, for example, or, as we have seen at Nellikuppam, sacking unionists while claiming that their dismissal had been for quite different reasons. On only a few occasions did Giri see through this duplicity, and the workers were often baffled that he should believe so readily the management interpretation of developments at the factory rather than their own.

Towards a Crisis

Labour unrest at Nellikuppam moved into the second of its three phases—a phase that was to be inconclusive and unsatisfactory for all the parties involved. Discontented with the paltry concessions Parry's had made at the end of 1937 and egged on by Jeevanandam during his frequent visits, workers at Nellikuppam presented Giri with a new manifesto of demands when he visited the factory in July 1938, and there was talk of a strike to force the management to meet the demands. With the help of members of the South Arcot District Congress Committee, Giri was able to avert a strike.²⁰ This time Parry's mishandled their side of the episode. Seeing the union's decision to call off the threatened strike as an unqualified victory for the management and an "unconditional" return to work by the men, Parry's rushed into the press an exultant report of the settlement. Giri at once wrote to Parry's to reprimand them for misrepresenting the outcome of his intervention: the strike had

been called off only because Giri had promised the workers that their demands would be investigated, not shelved by the management as Parry's now seemed to think. This was one occasion when Giri did see through Parry's duplicity and he made clear his resentment at being "placed in difficulties for having used my good offices in your favour".²¹ From Nellikuppam C Elphinston immediately wrote to apologize on behalf of Parry's: the mistake had been made due to the haste of getting the report to the press. Shrewdly, Parry's manager went on to assure Giri that such a mistake would not occur again "and may we also express the hope that we can look for your future interest in our labour problems, as to a very large extent we appear to wish to attain the same end."²² Parry's realized that in future they would have to show more deference towards the Minister for Labour and use more subtly persuasive tactics to secure his 'good offices'.

The Third Phase of Unrest

The third and climactic phase of labour unrest at Nellikuppam took a rather different form from the previous two. Until the end of 1938 the separate unions in Parry's sugar and distillery works had made little attempt to merge or to coordinate their demands. But as appreciation of their common grievances grew—with the encouragement of the Congress Socialists—and as workers became more impatient with Parry's refusal to make more than token concessions, the more radical union leaders decided to band together for a joint assault on the management. A conference was held at Nellikuppam on Christmas Day 1938 and it was followed in February 1939 by the formation of what was rather grandly called a Federation of Trade Unions for all of Parry's factory workers. The Federation had a nine member central committee consisting of two representatives each from Nellikuppam, Ranipet, Samalkot and a small sugar factory at Thuckalay, near Kanyakumari, plus a President, G Venkatarayudu. Nellikuppam was represented by Ratnam Pillai and by P Purushotham, who also acted as Federal Secretary. Their joint demands were:

- 1 an annual gratuity of a month's wages for all workers (hitherto a small gratuity had been paid to workers with more than 15 years' service);

- 2 compassionate allowances of half a month's pay for permanent workers laid off during the factories' slack season;

- 3 sick leave with full pay for workers during long periods of illness (at present they were allowed only seven days' paid sick leave a year);

- 4 privilege leave with full pay of upto ten days for permanent workers;

- 5 five additional days religious holiday for Christians and Muslims in addition to the eight granted to all workers;

6 abolition of the employment of middle men to recruit temporary additional workers on the grounds that they appropriated half of the workers' pay.¹

If Parry's refused to meet these demands, the Federation would hold a strike affecting all four factories.²¹

Mindful of Giri's reproaches the previous August, Parry's made no direct response to the Federation. Instead they passed the demands, and responsibility for settling the dispute, on to Giri. They then used all their powers of persuasion to convince him that the union leaders were unjustified in threatening a strike, but that if it occurred the government should intervene to protect Parry's. From the end of February 1939 Parry's carefully built up their case against the Federation and, at the same time presented arguments why the ministry's own interests were at stake.

Parry's repeated their willingness to recognize and negotiate with "responsible" unions in line with the ministry's declared labour policy. But, said Parry's, the Federation had not been formed according to the procedure laid down by the 1926 Trade Unions Act; it did not have the full support of workers at all the factories; and Venkatarayudu, the President; had no standing since he was not a leader of one of the existing unions. How could Parry's negotiate with an unregistered, unrepresentative organization? The management's second argument was an economic one. A strike during April or May—the factories' busiest time—would have disastrous consequences on the sugar growing ryots and the labourers who cut the cane. During the peak season Nellikuppam crushed nearly a thousand tons of sugar cane a day: a stoppage would mean that the 2,500 ryots supplying the factory would lose between them Rs 10,000 a day and nearly 10,000 field labourers would be thrown out of work. The government, too, would suffer through loss of revenue. To make their economic argument even more persuasive—one might say coercive—Parry's announced that from the end of February they would have to stop receiving cane from the ryots as they could not "risk having a large quantity of material in process" when the strike started. In addition, Parry's brought into the arena of discussions the representatives of the sugar growers and the cane cutters of South Arcot. A third tactic was to emphasize the political character of the threatened strike and play upon the ministry's known hostility to communism. On April 26, for example, Parry's forwarded to the Commissioner of Labour a copy of a notice circulated by the Nellikuppam Labour Union under the heading "Long live revolution! Down with capitalism! Workers of the factory, unite!" "We particularly invite your attention", wrote Parry's in their covering letter, "to the heading of the notice which together with the contents of the notice, in our opinion, make it clear that the Union have no genuine complaints against the Management and that their activities are revolutionary."²⁴

Finally, fitting their own dispute into the broader context of "the disturbed state of labour throughout this Presidency", Parry's argued that the only possible solution was "strong action by Government." Without being so aggressive as to offend the minister, Parry's let him know how they thought he should act. "We would urge", they wrote to Giri on February 22, "that in addition to any measures Government may see fit to take, and it is clear that immediate steps are necessary, Government will also see their way to prohibit all further public meetings within a radius of five miles of our factories, since it is our firm belief that if our workers are left to themselves and not interfered with or intimidated they would be only too pleased to work and earn the wages we are able to pay them." Again, on April 26, Parry's wrote to the Commissioner of Labour "We assume the District officials are in close touch with the position, but we would urge upon Government the advisability of preventing any public meetings in the precincts of our factories for the time being."²⁶

The Strike

The case of the labourers was not so competently or persuasively handled. The unionists suffered from disagreements among themselves, especially over the tactics they should follow. Sarma, for example, appeared before the Commissioner of Labour on February 27 and resolutely opposed both the Federation and the threatened strike. Subsequently, Giri met the Federation's Secretary, Purushotham, and was successful in persuading him to call off the strike. But his withdrawal was repudiated by Venkatarayudu: the strike was still on. This oscillation merely served to alienate Giri and made it easier for Parry's to convince him that Venkatarayudu was only interested in "destructiveness", a view with which the Commissioner of Labour concurred.²⁶ Although the strike was eventually called for April 25, it did not begin until the following day at Ranipet and Nellikuppam and appears not to have affected Thuckalay at all. Picketing, intensive at Samalkot and Ranipet from the beginning, was delayed at Nellikuppam until May 6, by which date Parry's had been successfully running the factory with blackleg labour for ten days, 150 disappointed strikers had returned to work, the police were already stationed outside the factory, and victory in the struggle was almost certain to go to Parry's. A more well timed and co-ordinated strike might have served the unionists' purposes better than this gallant but ragged affair.

Before the strike Ratnam Pillai reminded Giri that in a speech in the Assembly on March 29, 1939 Rajagopalachari had promised that the police would not intervene in labour disputes if picketers did not obstruct blacklegs and workers who wished to continue to work and if verbal and physical violence were not resorted to.²⁷ Ratnam Pillai seems to have been anxious that the strike at Nellikuppam would proceed along these

lines so as not to offend the ministry. Indeed, he seems to have wanted little more than a token strike to prove the workers' determination and to coax the ministry and the local Congress organizations to intervene and set up a court of enquiry. When picketing began at Nellikuppam at 4.30 a.m. — the working day started early — on May 6 the picketers agreed with the District Magistrate to stand some yards from the factory gates and not to obstruct those coming to work. However, at 7.15 Ratnam Pillai arrived with Jaganathan, President of the Ranipet Labour Union, who had quite different ideas as to how the strike should be run. He directed the picketers to block the gates and to shout revolutionary slogans. This was playing into the hands of the strikers' opponents. The police at once arrested 13 picketers; 24 more later in the day. That evening Jaganathan made a strong speech to the remaining strikers, urging them to maintain these aggressive tactics, even if it meant they all went to prison, and vehemently attacking Rajagopalachari. Early the next morning the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Cuddalore, responded by doing precisely what Parry's had hoped for: he ordered Jaganathan to leave Nellikuppam within six hours and not to return or to make a speech within a five mile radius of the factory for the next month. In addition the magistrate prohibited any public meetings, 'processions' or picketing within five miles of Nellikuppam for two months. When on the morning of May 7 Jagannathan and Ratnam Pillai defied the orders by leading a procession of 200 labourers through the bazaar at Nellikuppam, the leaders were arrested and the rest beaten with lathis by the armed police. At least 15 more arrests were made that morning and 44 people were, even by the District Magistrate's account, reported to have received "minor injuries" in the lathi charge.²⁸

Although the District Magistrate rescinded the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's prohibitory orders, such massive intervention by the magistracy and the armed police almost immediately brought the strike to an end. It was called off by the union on May 10. No concessions had been gained: Parry's were triumphant. The most that Giri and local Congressmen now felt able to do was to intercede with Parry's on behalf of the erstwhile strikers to try to persuade the management to take them back. Parry's agreed to do so, but they were in no hurry and refused to re-employ men whom they claimed had used violence against the factory manager and his assistants.²⁹

On the government side of the dispute, Giri found it increasingly difficult to pursue a constructive and conciliatory course. This was not merely because of the pressures put on him by Parry's on the one hand and the workers and unionists on the other. Giri was also under pressure from S V Ramamurti, the Commissioner of Labour, and from Rajagopalachari, both of whom were more adamantly opposed to the Federation and the threatened strike than the Minister for Labour himself. Ramamurti, one of the most senior Indian members of the Madras ICS cadre

and, so the unionists claimed, the father-in-law of a chemist earning Rs 650 a month at Nellikuppam,⁸⁰ was brought into the dispute by Giri at the end of February to assess the justice of the Federation's demands. On February 27 he met members of the Federation's Committee, as well as other unionists such as Sarma, spokesmen for Parry's and representatives of the South Arcot sugar growers. He at once decided that the Federation was not properly constituted in accordance with the 1926 Trade Unions Act, that the demands were ill-considered in view of the concessions Parry's had made in the past 18 months, that the strike threat was "thoroughly irresponsible", and that a stoppage would cause severe hardship to the cane growers and cutters of South Arcot.⁸¹ Ramamurti's hostile report was not made public until April 6 but Parry's either knew or guessed its tenor and pestered the Minister for Labour to let them have a copy "in order that we may be in a better position to deal with the demands of the strikers..."⁸² Perhaps because Giri thought the report unfair to the workers or because he wanted to maintain a balance between the two sides, he withheld the report for as long as he could. Ramamurti, nonetheless, continued to impress on the ministry his conviction that the Federation was not a properly constituted body and that any strike it called would be "entirely unjustified." While he showed little interest in further meetings with the unionists, Ramamurti met two of Parry's senior management on April 26 and encouraged them to believe that they could rely on state support to keep their factories working during a strike.⁸³

Rajagopalachari, too, favoured a firm line against the Federation. According to Hilton Brown, the Premier thought federations of trade unions "contrary to the rules of the game."⁸⁴ On May 7 he drafted an extraordinary appeal to the strikers which made it clear that he regarded them as children or simpletons who had foolishly ignored the sensible advice of their elders—Giri and himself—and now had to be forced to see reason. The main section of the text ran:

It grieves me that you persist in the strike. Your case had been looked into carefully, and the advice Government gave you was in your best interests. You have been misled by thoughtless men who persist in keeping you on the wrong path. Your present activities to keep up the strike amount to a fight carried on against the Government, against Sri Giri and me rather than against the factory management. I want you to go back to work at once.⁸⁵

Workers who despite recent events, expected the ministry to be sympathetic to their demands or at least strictly impartial and appoint a court of enquiry, were understandably furious that the Premier should, as they saw it, adopt such an offensively chiding and partisan approach.⁸⁶

As for Giri himself, he was borne along by events which he could no longer control. Labour and capital did not seem to want to be reconciled and he waited for the strike with a grim, unhappy resolution. On

April 29 he issued instructions to the District Magistrate, South Arcot, to post armed police at Nellikuppam and to have shorthand reporters available to record any "objectionable" speeches. He also authorized prohibitory orders under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code should the magistrates consider this necessary.⁸⁷ All that Giri could finally do once the strike began was to hope that the men would heed Rajagopalachari's appeal and call off the struggle. Then, he noted on May 7, "we can use our good offices with the employers and get the men back to work with the least victimisation."⁸⁸ There was something strangely pathetic about the impotence of the position in which the Minister for Industries and Labour now found himself.

Conclusion

There are, I would suggest, two main conclusions to be drawn from the story of labour relations at Nellikuppam between 1937 and 1939. The first is that in such a situation the European controlled company did not have the automatic support of the Congress ministry or immediate access to the coercive powers of the state to discipline its workers. Parry's learnt from experience that they had to frequently remind the ministry and publicly profess that they were in general agreement with its labour policy. They had to appear to be in full support of the principle of recognition for "responsible" unions, even if in practice relations with the unions in their own factories were less than open handed, and to show willingness to trust the ministry by transferring to it responsibility for solving the dispute. At the same time, Parry's kept up a steady pressure on the government to reject the Federation's demands and prevent the strike, when it occurred, from being effective. This was not the way Giri had wanted the situation to develop. He had believed in the efficacy of negotiation, conciliation and compromise. But because of the lack of cohesion and agreement about tactics among the unionists, because of the pressure from Parry's, the Commissioner of Labour and the Premier, Giri in the end was pushed from the path of conciliation onto the precipitous track of repression. In the end Parry's got the support of the ministry, the magistracy and the police; but they had to work hard to get it.

The second point that can be made is one concerning theory and method. It is often revealing to look at class struggles in modern society not in terms of one class versus another but in terms of a triangular situation in which the state, or a part of the state apparatus, is also involved. Of course there can be situations in which the state is openly and resolutely the defender of one class. But I think that any detailed investigation of a conflict like that analysed in this essay will show that the state either aspired to be impartial or tried to pursue a course different from that of the two contending classes. Engels pointed out that the state was "a product of society at a certain stage of development;...

the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction within itself that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel." To prevent society tearing itself apart "in fruitless struggle", it was, Engels argued, "necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate conflict and keep it within the bounds of "order"; and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state."³⁰ The attitudes and behaviour of the state are not, therefore, likely to be identical with those of the society's ruling classes, its dominant economic and political groups. There will be times when the state will appear to check, even oppose, ruling class aspirations. This helps to create the appearance of impartiality and enhances the authority and control of the state, even over the society's suppressed and exploited classes. Nonetheless, behind that mask of impartiality, despite the instances of state opposition to the ruling classes, it will be found that the general bias of the state is to make and maintain laws and a system of social control which favour the ruling classes and help to sustain their economic and political supremacy. That, in the final analysis, is the significance of Parry's double victory at Nellikuppam in 1939. Not only did they succeed in defeating a strike; they also prevailed on the state to crush it for them.

¹ Tamil Nadu Archives (hereafter TNA), Letter 63, Public, February 12, 1919, notes, p 5.

² TNA, GO 313, Judicial, June 21, 1921, notes.

³ *Madras Legislative Assembly Debates* (hereafter MLAD), VI, March 24, 1938, pp 713-15; XI, March 28, 1939, pp 903-5, 935.

⁴ *The Hindu*, October 21, 1937.

⁵ *The Hindu*, August 10, 1938.

⁶ MLAD, VI, March 25, 1938, pp 785-6; XI, March 28, 1939, pp 931-3.

⁷ Giri to Rajagopalachari, May 7, 1939, TNA, GO 1453, Development, June 3 1939, p 306.

⁸ S Ramanathan to Congress Secretary, September 21, 1938, *All India Congress Committee Papers*, Nehru Memorial Library, PL 3 (i).

⁹ MLAD, VI, March 25, 1938, pp 780-4.

¹⁰ MLAD, XI, March 28, 1939, pp 921-4.

¹¹ TNA, GO 1453, Development, June 3, 1939, pp 42-3, 135.

¹² Hilton Brown, *Parry's of Madras*, Madras 1954, pp 85, 142, 163-5, 202-4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p 274.

¹⁴ TNA, GO, 1748, Public (Confidential), October 3, 1936.

¹⁵ Ratnam Pillai to Giri, September 17, 1937, TNA, GO 2795, Development, December 15, 1937, p 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *The Hindu*, September 17, 1937.

¹⁸ Wright to Development Secretary, September 27, 1937, TNA, GO 2795, Development, December 15, 1937, pp 22-3.

¹⁹ MLAD, VI, March 25, 1938, pp 778-9.

²⁰ TNA, GO 2162, Development, September 2, 1938, pp 12-13, 24-33.

²¹ Giri to C Elphinstone, August 24, 1938, *ibid.*, pp 36-7.

²² Elphinstone to Giri, August 25, 1938, *ibid.*, pp 38-9.

- 23 TNA, GO 1453, Development, June 3, 1939, pp 5-10, 77-8.
- 24 Parry's to Giri, February 22, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 1-4; Parry's to Under-Secretary, Development, February 24, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 22-3; Parry's to Commissioner of Labour, April 26, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 125-6.
- 25 Parry's to Giri, February 22, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 3-4; Parry's to Commissioner of Labour, April 26, 1939, *ibid.*, p 126.
- 26 Commissioner of Labour to Development Secretary, February 27, 1939, *ibid.*, p 44.
- 27 Ratnam Pillai to Giri, telegram, April 26, 1939, *ibid.*, p 144.
- 28 District Magistrate, South Arcot, to Chief Secretary, Madras, May 8, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 187-93.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp 195-243. The strike at Samalkot continued until May 28, 1939.
- 30 For example, *ibid.*, pp 131, 139.
- 31 Ramamurti to Development Secretary, February 27, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 38-44.
- 32 Parry's to Under-Secretary, Development, March 3, 1939, *ibid.*, p 48.
- 33 Ramamurti to Development Secretary, April 26, 1939, *ibid.*, pp 121-2.
- 34 Brown, *Parry's*, p 297.
- 35 Rajagopalachari, May 7, 1939, TNA, GO 1453, Development, June 3 1939, p 307.
- 36 Secretary, Samalkot Labour Union, May 11, 1939, *ibid.*, p 213.
- 37 Giri, April 29, 1939, *ibid.*, p 295.
- 38 Giri, May 7, 1939, *ibid.*, p 306.
- 39 Frederick Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State", *Selected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, III Moscow, 1970, pp 326-7.

ANIL BARAN RAY

*Communal Attitudes to British Policy:
The Case of the Partition of Bengal 1905*

BENGAL was partitioned in 1905, the scheme of partition, as devised by the British government of India, was denounced by the Hindu community of Bengal and supported by the Muslim community. This paper attempts to examine the reasons behind the conflicting attitudes adopted towards the partition by the different communities—Hindu, Muslim and British.

According to the British government the principal motive for the partition was that of administrative convenience. Bengal, with a population of seventy-eight million and an area of 189,000 square miles (Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa being included in it) was too large a province to be efficiently administered. Therefore, when in 1903, A H L Fraser, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, proposed that the Dacca and Mymensingh districts should be separated from Bengal and transferred to Assam, Lord Curzon readily agreed with him. Fraser's motive was, of course, not purely administrative. It was political, too. Dacca and Mymensingh districts should be separated from Bengal, he pointed out to Curzon, because these two were "the hotbed of the purely Bengali movement, unfriendly if not seditious in character, and dominating the whole tone of Bengali administration."¹ Curzon agreed with Fraser's assessment and proposed to relieve Bengal of its "elements of weakness

and dissension". At the same time, the transfer of these parts of Bengal to Assam, he believed, would result in the reinvigoration of the so far neglected Assam. Thus, from the government's point of view, the two main objects of the partition were the relief of Bengal and the reinvigoration of Assam.

Lord Curzon's original scheme for the partition published in the Gazette of India on December 12, 1903, proposed to transfer the Chittagong Division, Dacca and Mymensingh districts and Hill Tippera to Assam, and Chota Nagpur to the central provinces. It proposed to compensate Bengal to some extent by adding some Oriya-speaking areas from Madras and the Central Provinces to Bengal. This scheme, if carried out, would have relieved the Bengal government of the burden of administering eleven million people. The scheme, however, aroused the anger of the Hindu community of Bengal and drew no support from the Muslim community. Further, the scheme was unacceptable to the Muslims of the Eastern part of Bengal because they feared that the government wanted to turn them into Assamese.²

Curzon's Strategy

Curzon obviously had no doubt in his mind that his partition scheme would meet with the opposition of the Hindus of Bengal. But the government could not afford to be alienated from both the communities - Hindus and Muslims. If one was angry, the other's support must be sought, if necessary, by modifying the partition scheme. With this object in view, Curzon undertook a tour of the Muslim majority districts of Eastern Bengal in February 1904. During his visit to Dacca, he openly hinted that he was thinking of creating a new province out of Bengal whose capital would be Dacca which he emphasized, "would invest the Mohamedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of old Musalman Viceroys and Kings"³. He also made it understood that Assam would be "an adjunct rather than the most prominent feature"⁴. Lord Curzon was thus able to allay the Muslim suspicion and win over the Nawab of Dacca, the leader of Muslims, to the cause of partition.⁵

Assured of Muslim support, Curzon decided to ignore the Hindu opposition and took the firm decision of creating a new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, almost equal in size to that of Bengal, by drawing a new boundary line through central Bengal. A larger area than proposed in the original scheme was transferred to the new province with its capital at Dacca.⁶

This raises doubts regarding the British claim that their intention was purely one of ensuring administrative efficiency. Such efficiency would have been ensured by accepting either of the two alternative proposals suggested by the nationalist Hindu leaders of Bengal. The first recommended the separation of non-Bengali areas such as Orissa, Chota Nagpur

and Bihar from Bengal, instead of the division of the Bengali-speaking areas; and the second suggested that Bengal could be given a governor with a Council in order to lighten the burden of administration.⁷ In revoking the partition of Bengal in 1911, the British government acted on the first proposal of the nationalist leaders. But in 1905 it could not accept either of these two proposals because its motive was not purely administrative. It wanted, in addition, to weaken the political integration achieved by the Hindu politicians of Bengal by distributing them between the two provinces⁸ and also to reduce the influence of Calcutta over the rest of Bengal, which it considered disproportionate. It was not to the liking of the governments of India and Bengal that the mandate of Calcutta should be echoed all over Bengal. A dislike which they phrased in philosophical terms as follows:

It cannot be for the lasting good of any country or any people that public opinion or what passes for it should be manufactured by a comparatively small number of people at a single center and should be disseminated thence for universal adoption, all other views being discouraged or suppressed.⁹

They, therefore, wanted to establish local centres of independent opinion by giving a majority to the Muslims in the new eastern province and to Biharis and Oriyas in the west. Thus, the motives behind British policy were quite practical : to divide the Hindu politicians and also to divide the Muslims and the Hindus.

It would, of course, be unfair and partisan to say that Curzon had modified his original scheme for partition and decided to create a new province of Eastern Bengal only to purchase Muslim support for his policies. He was also actuated by a desire to bring about some improvement in the miserable administration of Eastern Bengal which had been neglected since the beginning of British rule and in which, as Lovat Fraser, the biographer of Curzon, points out, "Crime was rife, the peasantry were crushed beneath the exactions of absentee landlords, the police system was feeble, education a mere shadow, and internal communications disagreeably inadequate." All this could happen, because "the old government was engrossed" with Calcutta and the surrounding areas where they were spending practically the whole revenues of Bengal.¹⁰ The need for administrative reform in Eastern Bengal was genuine, no doubt; but as Hardinge confessed in his letter to Crewe, the Secretary of State, "The desire to aim a blow at the Bengalis (he meant the Bengali Hindus) overcame other considerations in giving effect to that laudable object".¹¹ Hardinge felt that a grave injustice had been done to the Bengali Hindus whom the partition had left in a minority in both the provinces (Bengal, and Eastern Bengal and Assam). In the Legislative Council of Bengal, the Bengali Hindus were outnumbered by the Biharis and Oriyas and in Eastern Bengal, they were outnumbered by the Muslims and Assamese.

The Attitude of the Home Government

What was the attitude of the Secretary of State or, so to say, the Home Government to the Curzon scheme for the partition of Bengal? There are reasons to believe that the Home Government did not like it. The Secretary of State, Brodrick, suggested a short postponement of the partition in view of the tremendous agitation against it. Curzon pleaded that "if any concessions were made at the eleventh hour to such an agitation, it would at once assume a serious character; the Government of India would forfeit the respect of all classes and a premium would be placed on similar tactics in the future."¹² Finally, Brodrick reluctantly agreed to push the Bill through the Council only because of, he wrote to Curzon, "the strong view you have taken upon this".¹³ Brodrick did not consider the agitation against partition unnatural. Nor did he believe that the agitation against the partition was "organized by a small and disloyal faction on anti-British lines."¹⁴ One could easily perceive a sympathetic tone from his dispatch on the partition dated, June 9, 1905:

That a large and upon the whole homogeneous community of forty-one and a half millions, with Calcutta as their centre of culture and political and commercial life, should object to the transfer of three-fifths of their number to a new administration with a distant capital, involving the severance of old and historic ties and the breaking up of racial unity, appears to me in no way surprising.¹⁵

We get a further inkling of Brodrick's mind from the telegram he sent to Curzon on August 16, 1905 in accepting his resignation. The opening words of the telegram were as follows:

I have learned your decision to resign with very deep regret. Throughout your administration, since your appointment as Governor-General in 1898, my colleagues and I have endeavoured to give you constant support in the many measures of administrative reform which you have initiated, including the partition of Bengal, upon which we recently adopted your proposals.¹⁶

Brodrick's emphasis upon "including the partition of Bengal" was interpreted in Bengal "as a specific and public indication that the Home Government was not at one with Lord Curzon about the partition".¹⁷ The belief of the Bengali Hindus that the Home Government was sympathetic with their cause undoubtedly led them to intensify the agitation. Thus Fraser, the biographer of Curzon, bitterly complains, "By far the most serious and potent influences which fermented and kept alive the agitation against the partition of Bengal came from England."¹⁸

A far more vociferous critic of Curzon's partition of Bengal was the Prince of Wales who after his visit to India in 1905-06 became convinced that it was a grave wrong. In fact, he was so bitter about it that he said to Charles Hardinge that "Curzon had never done a single thing right in India."¹⁹ No wonder that the Prince of Wales as King George V, annulled the partition of Bengal in 1911 and thus satisfied the uneasy

conscience of the Home Government in this connection.

Needless to say, the British non-officials in Bengal, as a community, had full support in what their government did. There is therefore, no point in discussing separately their attitude to the partition question.

Origins of Hindu Dissent

In the opinion of most Hindus, Lord Curzon might have been a strong administrator but he lacked the vision of a statesman. He was in the habit of riding roughshod over Indian opinion. A dictator by temperament, he never learned to use power by suggestion and never cared to enlist popular support for his policies. He tried to extend government control over municipalities and universities at a time when nationalist sentiment was opposed to that. For instance, in the case of the Municipality Act (1898) by establishing government control over the Calcutta Corporation, he so antagonised Surendranath Banerjea, the then undisputed Hindu leader of the Bengalis, that Banerjea led "twenty-eight Indian members out of the Calcutta Corporation with an oath never to return until the non-official control was restored."²⁰ Similarly, Curzon's Universities Act (1904) stipulated that the government would appoint Vice Chancellors and had necessarily to approve the appointment of lecturers and professors. The Act made education restrictive and expensive. In so doing, it aroused the universal condemnation of teachers, students and the people at large. "University reform", say Thompson and Garratt, "cannot be effective in an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment, and everyone combined to make the new Act inoperative".²¹

To such bitterness and resentment, Curzon added hostility by making offhand comments about the character of the oriental people. P G Ray writes:

He (Curzon) took the Bengali people by storm, at a convocation of the University of Calcutta (February 11, 1905), by a sweeping indictment of their love for vile flattery and disregard for truth. In proceeding to elaborate his proposition, Lord Curzon laid considerable emphasis on the fact that the highest ideal of truth was to a large extent a Western conception, and that the Easterners more often than not paid vicarious homage to truth through tortuous and diplomatic ways.²²

Thus Lord Curzon was a reactionary dictator and his administration "gall and worm-wood" in the eyes of the Hindus of Bengal. It is, therefore, natural that the Hindus reacted strongly to the division of Bengal into two provinces.

The Response of the Hindus

The partition was regarded by the Hindus as a deliberate attack on the Bengali 'nation' united by a common history, language and

race. It was regarded "as a national calamity, in the sense that it would alienate Hindus and Mohamedans, interfere with the solidarity of the Bengali-speaking population, and weaken their political influence"²³. The Hindu leaders of Bengal accused the British government of following a "divide and rule" policy, of playing one community off against the other. Apart from the emotional factors, there were some practical reasons which inspired the Hindu opposition to the partition of Bengal. In the government's open dislike for the predominance of Calcutta, the Hindu leaders saw a desire to punish Calcutta and its citizens for the prominent part they had played in the Congress.²⁴ On the other hand, the division of Bengal affected some professional and commercial interests. Thus the lawyers of Calcutta were disturbed at the prospect of the establishment of a separate high court in Dacca and the business interests were vexed at the reduction of the size of their market. Such elements were agitated at the partition of Bengal for practical reasons.

Far from weakening the unity of the Hindu politicians of Bengal, Lord Curzon, through the partition, strengthened their unity more than ever before and consolidated their opposition to British rule. In the first stage of the agitation against the partition scheme, starting in December, 1903, Surendranath Banerjea, the leader of the movement "used the same weapons he had employed in opposing Curzon's earlier measures—press articles, public meetings of protest, petitions, and deputations—and he had the same lack of success in deflecting the British from their purposes."²⁵

Boycott as a Weapon

Realizing the inadequacy of his methods by early 1905, Surendranath now looked for a more effective weapon to exert pressure upon the British government and he found it in the boycott. "Who first conceived the idea of a boycott of British goods" Surendranath writes in his autobiography, "I cannot say — by several, I think, at one and the same time. It first found expression at a public meeting in the district of Pabna, and it was repeated at public meetings held in other Mofussil towns; and the successful boycott of American goods by the Chinese was proclaimed throughout Asia and reproduced in Indian newspapers".²⁶

Boycott was a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it would hurt the economic interests of the British and on the other it would promote the development of indigenous industries by increasing the demand for home production. The boycott and *Swadeshi* were thus recognized as, sources of power and wealth. "We recognized that boycott of foreign goods", wrote Rabindranath Tagore, "was a means for strengthening us not a mere instrument for annoying others."²⁷ *Swadeshi* was, of course, no new thing to Bengal. As early as 1867, the Hindu Mela was started, mainly through the initiative of the Tagore family, with the following

objectives: "The manufacture and use of indigenous products, encouragement to the growth and use of national language, and the development of the physique of the nation's manhood for a persistent struggle against foreign domination."²⁶

The boycott and *Swadeshi* movement created a spirit of sacrifice among the Hindus of Bengal. They would purchase inferior home-made goods at a higher price than the British goods. New industries were founded, Swadeshi stores were opened and educational institutions for imparting national education were established. Most of them failed due to lack of experience. But people now had developed a new sense, a realization that, however difficult it might be, there was no alternative to building up their own strength.

Countervailing Measures

Initially, the British government did not take the boycott and *Swadeshi* movement seriously, hoping that it would collapse over time. But as the movement gained momentum, they responded with repressive measures such as the prohibition of picketing, ban on meetings, censorship of the press, passing of severe sentences, and so on.

How was the reaction of the non-official British community? We have it on the authority of Surendranath Banerjea that the initial reaction of the European press to the boycott resolution was not hostile. "All that the *Englishmen* newspaper said about it was that 'the policy of boycott must considerably embitter the controversy if it is successful; while in the opposite event it will render the movement and its supporters absurd'. The *Statesman* was inclined to ridicule the whole movement, but there was not a trace of any resentment on the ground that an anti-British agitation had been inaugurated".²⁸ The tone of the British newspapers, of course, soon changed as the movement intensified and they joined the government and non-official British public in condemning the boycott movement.

The refusal of the British government to budge an inch from their stand discredited the Constitutionalist politicians such as Surendranath Banerjea and Gopal Krishan Gokhale. They were moderates. They were regarded as too pacifist and too cautious by the extremists among the Congressmen such as Bipin Chandra Pal of Bengal, Tilak of Maharashtra and Lajpat Rai of Punjab who pointed out that good government is no substitute for self-government and proclaimed *Swaraj* as the goal of India. The boycott and *Swadeshi* were only the means to that end. The two groups differed not only in their attitude to self-government but also in their interpretation of boycott. Surendranath and Gokhale looked upon the boycott as an economic weapon to be used temporarily against the British government until the injustice was undone, that is, the partition was revoked. Thus, "The boycott was a temporary measure adopted for a particular object, and was to be given up as soon as that

object was attained,"²⁹ Surendranath writes. With the extremists, it was not to be so. For them, boycott was not only an economic weapon but also a political weapon. It was not to be discarded with the attainment of a particular object; it was to be continued. In the words of Bipin Chandra:

It is a movement of the determination of the people not only to save the industries of the nation but also to create those forces in our community which...will work out the problem of Swaraj.... In this boycott and by this boycott, we propose to create in the people a consciousness of the Pararaj on the one hand, and the desire for Swaraj on the other. It is by the assertion of the determination of the people against the despotism of the government, within absolutely legal bounds, we can hope to kill the Maya that has overcome us. And that is the end of boycott politically. By it we shall reduce the government to the pound-of-flesh rule.³⁰

The divergence of attitudes and difference of methods led the two groups to a clash in the 1907 Surat Session of the Congress resulting in the division of the Congress into two parties — Moderates and Extremists. "The most celebrated casualty of the Bengal Partition," Broomfield observes, "was the unity of the Indian National Congress."³¹

Rise of Political Terrorism

The failure of the boycott movement to produce any effect on the British government led a section of the Bengali youth to resort to political terrorism. They borrowed their method from Europe, especially from Ireland where shooting had long been recognized as a legitimate political weapon in the fight against an unpopular government. They drew their inspiration from the Gita—its philosophy of selfless action—and also from the writings of Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda and Aurobindo. The writings of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda kindled in them "a kind of military courage and selfless service for the *daridra narayan* and for the motherland."³² Following the teachings of Aurobindo, they conceived the motherland as the Goddess Kali and believed that supreme sacrifice for the motherland was a religious duty.

What was the reason for the rise of political terrorism in Bengal? We shall first cite the opinion of some British administrators. Most British administrators regarded terrorism as a law and order problem to be stamped out by repressive measures. That was the view of Lord Craddock the Home Member in the Viceroy Lord Hardinge's Executive Council, who believed that terrorism was the product of some disease inherent in Bengali society. That was also the view of Lord Ronaldshay who believed that terrorism was a product of the cultural reaction of Indians against European institutions and values. Men like Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, and his Executive Councillor, Lyon, on the other hand, believed that the roots of terrorism lay in the nationalist

feeling and in the frustrated ambition of terrorists for political freedom. They believed that it was a political problem, not simply a law and order problem and that one way to remove the cause of terrorism was to introduce administrative reform and make concessions to the Indians.

Revolutionary terrorism was undoubtedly an outgrowth of the partition of Bengal and the repressive measures which followed it. "The forces of disorder", Surendranath wrote, "had been let loose, and by the authorities themselves, in a great and newly constituted province. The popular faith in constitutional methods was shaken; and young and ardent spirits, writhen under disappointment, but eager to serve their country, were led into the dangerous paths of lawlessness and violence, unrestrained by their elders."⁸³ Tagore, too, held that revolutionary terrorism in Bengal was due to the "provocative acts" of the British authorities. Instead of removing the cause of grievance and soothing the natural reaction of the people against the partition of Bengal, the authorities adopted more and more repressive measures. In the words of Tagore: "They (the British government) sought to still the waves raised by their own blows by beating the waters more violently. Such conduct may indicate their power but does not prove them to be wise rulers".⁸⁴ Both Surendranath and Tagore believed that a murder is a murder from whatever motives it is committed and that extremism does not pay in the long run. They had little belief in the efficacy of terrorist methods, nor did they approve of it and yet they could not but admire the terrorists who were second to none in their love for the motherland. Thus, Tagore wrote: "They (the terrorists) cast themselves as a sacrifice into the fire they had lighted and, on that account, deserve salutation not from us alone but from all the world".⁸⁵

The Bengali Hindu community, in general, worshipped the terrorists as heroes for another psychological reason; they were removing the stigma of effeminacy attributed to the Bengalis by persons like T B Macauley and John Strachey. Macauley wrote: "The physical organization of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy... His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness for purposes of manly resistance".⁸⁶ In a similar vein, John Strachey wrote:

Bengal is the only country in the world where you can find a great population among whom personal cowardice is looked upon as in no way disgraceful... It is for such reasons that Englishmen who know Bengal, and the extraordinary effeminacy of its people, find it difficult to treat seriously many of the political declamations in which English speaking Bengalis are often fond of indulging.⁸⁷

The "blood deeds" of the Bengal terrorists were conceived as an answer to the "charge of national impotence". Susanne H Rudolph comments, "Indeed, there seems to have been some perverse historical dialectic in violent Bengali nationalism as though the young men of Calcutta were saying 'No' to Macauley's and Strachey's assertions of

their physical ineffectualities".³⁸ The terrorist activities of the Bengal revolutionaries thus satisfied a deep psychological need of their personality and for the same reason, it was highly gratifying to the Bengali Hindus in general.

Attitude of the Muslim Community

Terrorism failed to enlist any support from Bengali Muslims. There were social, economic, and religious reasons for this. The leaders of the movement were Hindu by religion. Their glorification of the Hindu past of India and especially the terrorists' worship of the motherland as the Goddess Kali alienated the anti-idolatrous Muslims. Socially and economically, terrorists belonged to the middle class while the Muslims were mostly poor peasants. Educated as terrorists were, they failed to bridge the gap separating them from the uneducated masses, again mostly Muslim. They were essentially *bhadraloks* aristocratic in their outlook and did not care for politicizing the masses, the *chhotaloks*. Nor were they bothered about the social revolution. Political emancipation was their aim; violence was their method. They were idealists and their attempt to find a short cut to their goal through bomb and revolver met with the superior force of the British and collapsed. Though the terrorists failed to bring about a revolution, it must be said to their credit that they were able to create among the people a spirit of sacrifice for the cause of the country by sacrificing their own lives. "Unless this background were prepared, thousands would not have rallied around Gandhi in 1920 when he had just begun his political career in India".³⁹

In discussing the British motives in the partition of Bengal, we referred to Lord Curzon's winning the Muslims over to the cause of partition. But why did the Muslims of Eastern Bengal support the partition? In order to answer this question one must take into account the fact that Muslims were educationally and economically a very backward and depressed community, compared with the Hindus. Thus, "in Bengal, in 1901, only 22 out of every 10,000 Muslims knew English compared to 114 out of 10,000 Hindus. They held only 41 of the 'high appointments' under the government while the Hindus, who were less than twice as numerous as the Muslims, held 1,235".⁴⁰

The 1911 census gives us another set of comparative figures.⁴¹

PROPORTIONS

	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>Muslims</i>
Tenants	5		9
Landlords	7		3
Lawyers	9		1
Doctors	5		1
Teachers	7		2
Policemen	2		1
Civil servants	3.5		1

The figures quoted above show the overwhelming backwardness of the Muslims compared with the Hindus. The government hinted and the Muslims believed that in the new Muslim-majority province of Eastern Bengal, they would have better education, most government jobs, and a larger share of state patronage and thus would be able to improve their lot. The creation of the new province was, therefore, supported by them.

To explain fully the Muslim support for the partition, it has to be also kept in mind that the Hindu character of the nationalist movement kept the Muslims away from it. We have already referred to the writings of Bankim Chandra, Vivekananda and Aurobindo which were Hindu in character and from which the terrorists who were the worshippers of the *Sakti* cult (Goddess *Kali*) drew their inspiration. "A Hindu nationalism, broadbased on Hindu religion and the tradition of the past glory and greatness of the Hindus, loomed large in Bengal since the third quarter of the 19th century."⁴² The Muslims did not take any part in the renaissance, reformation and political awakening of Bengal.⁴³ There was not a single Muslim member on the Committees of Landholders' Society, British India Society and the British Indian Association—the different political associations established in Bengal prior to the founding of the Indian National Congress.⁴⁴ The Indian National Congress was, of course, a national and secular organization, but led as it was by Hindu leaders, the Muslims did not feel very enthusiastic about it. That is proved by the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 of which the Nawab of Dacca, the leader of the Muslims of Eastern Bengal, was a prominent member.

Surendranath Banerjea, the Hindu leader of the anti—partition movement writes in his autobiography: "Swadeshi had evoked the fervour of a religious movement. It has become part of our Dharma."⁴⁵ Naturally, the Muslims could not be expected to subscribe to something which had become a part of the Hindu Dharma. Surendranath describes an incident in which he administered the *Swadeshi* vow to a Hindu audience in the presence of the god of their worship.⁴⁶ Such incidents and the use of Hindu symbols to identify nationalism could not but be offensive to the Muslims.

Hindu-Muslim communal antagonism was intensified as a result of the partition of Bengal. Muslim separatism became a permanent feature of Indian politics from then onwards. Such separatism, institutionalized through the Muslim League and at different times overtly and covertly supported and encouraged by the British, and the Congress failure to bring the Muslims back into the mainstream of the nationalist movement led to the partition of Bengal and the country in 1947.

- 1 Quoted in John R McLane, "The Decision to Partition Bengal", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol 2, No 3, July 1965, p 224.
- 2 Lovat Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After*, Henry Holt and Co., New York 1911, p 381.
- 3 *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston*, Vol 3, Address at Dacca, February 18, 1904 p 303, Quoted in McLane, *op. cit.*, p 228.
- 4 Lovat Fraser, *op. cit.*, p 381.
- 5 Amales Tripathi writes, "He (Curzon) roped in Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dacca by promising him a loan of Rs 100,000 at nominal interest and the latter had little difficulty in assembling a huge gathering of Muslims to cheer the Viceroy's plan for a Moslem province". *The Extremist Challenge*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta 1967, p 97.
- 6 "The new province included, in addition to Assam, the three great Bengal divisions of Chittagong, Dacca, and Rajshahi, and a few minor pieces of territory. It had an area of 106, 540 square miles, and a population of thirty-one millions, of whom eighteen million were Mahomedans and twelve million Hindus". Fraser, *op. cit.*, p 382. Fraser further points out that Curzon personally was in favour of naming the new province as "The North Eastern Provinces", but the name Eastern Bengal was finally adopted to make concession to Bengali feeling.
- 7 McLane, *op. cit.*, p 230.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p 234.
- 9 Government of India to the Secretary of State, February 2, 1905. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p 233.
- 10 Lovat Fraser, *op. cit.*, p 19.
- 11 Hardinge to Crewe, July 13, 1811, *Crewe-Papers* Cambridge University Library. Quoted in Tripathi, *op. cit.*, p 102.
- 12 Curzon to Brodrick, October 9, 1905, Quoted in David Dilks, *Curzon in India*, vol 2 Taplinger Publishing Co., New York 1969, p 245.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Dispatch No 75 (public), June 9, 1905, Home Department Publications. quoted in Amales Tripathi, p 101.
- 16 Quoted in Fraser, pp 386-387.
- 17 Fraser, p 387.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p 386.
- 19 David Dilks, *op. cit.*, p 249.
- 20 J H Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society : Twentieth Century Bengal*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1968, p 29.
- 21 Edward Thompson and G T Garratt, *Rise and Fulfillment of the British Rule in India*. Central Book Depot, Allahabad 1969, p 573.
- 22 P C Ray, *Life and Times of C R Das* Oxford University Press, Calcutta 1927, p 49. Lord Curzon qualified his statement with the following words: "I do not thereby mean to claim that Europeans are universally or even generally truthful, still lest do I mean that Asiatics deliberately or habitually deviate from the truth. The one proposition would be absurd, and the other misleading". The qualification went unheeded. See David Dilks, *op. cit.*, p 203.
- 23 Surendranath Banerjea, *A Nation in Making* Oxford University Press, Calcutta 1963. (First published 1925), p 215.
- 24 That Curzon had a thorough dislike for the Congress which he believed was operating mainly from Calcutta was a fact. He wrote: "Its best wirepullers and its most frothy orators all reside here (in Calcutta). The perfection of their machinery and the tyranny which it enables them to exercise are truly remarkable. They dominate public opinion in Calcutta; they affect the high court; they frighten the local government; and they are sometimes not without serious influence upon the

- government of India. The whole of their activity is directed to creating an agency so powerful that they may one day be able to force a weak government to give them what they desire". See Curzon to Brodrick, February 2, 1905, *Correspondence with the Secretary of State*, 1904-1905, British Museum, pp 51-52. Quoted in David Dilks, p 202. In the same letter Curzon wrote: "Any measure in consequence that would divide the Bengali-speaking population that would permit independent centres of activity and influence to grow up; that would dethrone Calcutta from its place as the centre of successful intrigue, or that would weaken the influence of the lawyer class, who have the entire organization in their hands is intensely and hotly resented by them" See Amales Tripathi, p 98.
- ²⁵ Broomfield, *op. cit.*, p 29.
- ²⁶ Surendranath Banerjea, *op. cit.*, p 176.
- ²⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, *Towards Universal Man*, Asia Publishing House, New York 1969, p 112.
- ²⁸ Soumyendranath Tagore, "Evaluation of Swadeshi Thought", in Atul Gupta (ed), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*. The National Council of Education, Jadavpur 1958, p 208.
- ²⁹ Surendranath, *op. cit.*, p 180.
- ³⁰ Surendranath, *op. cit.*, p 170.
- ³¹ Quoted in Soumyendranath Tagore, "Evolution of Swadeshi Thought" in Atul Gupta (ed), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance* The National Council of Education, Jadavpur 1958, pp 221-222.
- ³² Broomfield *op. cit.*, p 34.
- ³³ Gopal Halder, "Revolutionary Terrorism", in *Studies on the Bengal Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, p 222.
- ³⁴ Surendranath, p 219.
- ³⁵ Tagore, *op. cit.*, p 101.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p 258.
- ³⁷ T B Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, "Warren Hastings", Boston, 1900. Quoted in S Rudolph, "Profile in Courage", *World Politics*, October, 1963, p 101.
- ³⁸ Quoted in Rudolph, "Profile in Courage", *World Politics*, October, 1963, p 101.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 101.
- ⁴⁰ R C Majumdar, "Gandhi's Place in the History of Indian Nationalism" in M D Lewis (ed), *Gandhi: Maker of Modern India*, D C Heath and Co., 1968, p 61.
- ⁴¹ McLane, *op. cit.*, p 229.
- ⁴² Quoted in Broomfield, *op. cit.*, p 44.
- ⁴³ R C Majumdar, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century* K L Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta 1960, p 76.
- ⁴⁴ Gopal Halder, *op. cit.*, p 230.
- ⁴⁵ Majumdar, *Glimpses of Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, p 101.
- ⁴⁶ Surendranath, *op. cit.*, p 212.

Marxian Political Economy

PART THIRTEEN

THIS is the concluding article of the above series. Here we shall first complete our discussion of the sources of economic crises under capitalism. We shall then refer briefly in succession to three important aspects which we have so far not touched upon—namely, the role of money and credit, the features of the imperialist stage of capitalism and developments in contemporary capitalism. We shall close with some concluding comments.

The Falling Rate of Profit

We had noted last time that the law of the tendency for the rate of profit to decline must be distinguished from other forces that may cause the rate of profit to fall. In particular, a temporary rise in wages brought about by a sharp increase in the rate of accumulation is one important source of such a (transitory) decline in the rate of profit. Marx examines this case at some length in Volume I of *Capital*. He points out that under certain conditions, "...the scale of accumulation may be suddenly extendedthe demand for labourers may exceed the supply, and, therefore, wages may rise."¹ But while this may lead to a decline in the rate of profit, such a decline will be a rather temporary phenomenon. For accumulation will slacken as soon as profitability is seriously threatened. What is more, the capitalists facing higher wages

will resort to mechanization and other labour-saving devices. Both these developments serve to push wages down and restore the rate of profit. "The mechanisms of the process of capitalist production removes the very obstacles that it temporarily creates. The price of labour falls again to a level corresponding with the needs of the self-expansion of capital."² Clearly Marx is here dealing with 'the short run' and not with a fundamental law or tendency of capitalist production. The tenor of his discussion suggests that the process (of a temporary decline in the rate of profit) is self correcting, and rather quickly at that. The decline in the profit rate associated with a spurt in wages brought about by a momentarily high rate of accumulation can spell the end of the upswing phase of a short term business cycle, but certainly not an economic crisis of capitalism. The tendency for the rate of profit to decline, on account of the growth in the organic composition of capital not sufficiently compensated by the growth of labour productivity is however, an altogether different matter. Such a tendency to decline expresses a fundamental contradiction inherent in the capitalist development of productive forces.

How does this 'law' of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall operate? Many have interpreted the law to mean a "secular decline" of the rate of profit. That is to say, the rate of profit would show a gradual and continuous decline over historical time. On the basis of such an interpretation, attempts have been made to verify or to 'disprove' the law empirically, by computing rates of profit on capital at various points in time over a sufficiently long period. Apart from the validity or otherwise of such an interpretation of the law, the pitfalls involved in computing from business data something closely resembling the Marxian conception of the average rate of profit on social capital as a whole are many. This fact in itself would suggest that one has to be extremely wary of treating the results of such exercises as 'proof' or otherwise of the law. More importantly, however, the interpretation itself seems questionable. A careful reading of Marx's discussion of the law suggests rather that the tendency for the rate of profit to decline expresses itself in and is in turn stemmed and reversed through periodic economic crises. The picture that suggests itself may be roughly outlined as follows.

When a process of long term capitalist expansion has been in progress for some time, productive forces are developing rapidly, through mechanisation, that is, increasing organic composition of capital. The investments in new and more "capital intensive" methods of production required for this process are made by capitalists for at least three reasons: (i) Capitalist competition necessitates it; (ii) With gradual depletion of the initially large reserve army of labour, wages begin to rise, thus inducing capitalists to mechanise. (iii) The conditions of realization of surplus value—that is of selling commodities produced at or around their prices of production—are favourable, and are expected by

the capitalist class to remain so. But sooner or later, the investments that capitalists are compelled to make on account of the above forces do not yield a commensurate increase in the productivity of labour. After all, technological changes under capitalism are not socially planned, but are the products of disparate individual decisions of the capitalists. As such, there is no guarantee at all that the overall increase in productivity of social labour will be such as to render the investments expended in bringing about the technological changes profitable. On the contrary, as noted above, there generally occurs a point in the phase of long-term capitalist expansion when the rate of profit tends to drop due to an insufficient increase of productivity.³

This very decline of the rate of profit would lead to a reduction in fresh investment, and to some losses on already committed investments. The competition among capitalists would intensify, as Marx points out,

So long as things go well, competition effects an operating fraternity of the capitalist class...so that each shares in the common loot in proportion to the size of his respective investment. But as soon as it no longer is a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and to shove it off upon another.⁴

How is this conflict settled, and how are conditions of 'normal' capitalist operation (that is, an adequate rate of profit) restored? With the onset of a crisis, a number of developments take place which restore normalcy: many existing establishments close down, so that a certain part of social capital ceases to function as such. The idle capital loses its value, partly through physical depreciation, but largely through being rendered idle and hence not yielding profit. Capital which is not physical means of production but is simply in the form of claims on prospective profit (promissory notes on expected production and so on.) loses a great deal of its value as soon as the general rate of profit (and hence also the expected rate of profit declines.

Prices begin to decline, and rather steeply in many instances, so that the value of commodity-capital in society as a whole also declines sharply. With declining prices of commodities, the elements of fixed and circulating capital decline in value. The disturbance of the normal price relations on account of the onset of crisis interferes with and halts the process of reproduction of capital. Capitalists who are unable to recover their invested capital because of the decline in prices of the commodities that they sell obviously cannot reconvert their capital into means of production on the same scale as before. Further, their existing capital, embodied in various means of production, also lose a good deal of their value. As many capitalists find themselves unable to repay their debts, a chain of bankruptcies follow. The credit system collapses. Meanwhile, the decline in capital-values and the wave of bankruptcies would lead to thousands and thousands of workers being laid off.

The net effect of all this would be to reduce the total value of capital stock, to make urgent (after the crisis had been in operation for some time) the replacement of means of production, and to reduce wages. The rate of profit would thus be raised and even restored to its pre-crisis level. In effect, "...stagnation of production would have prepared—within capitalistic limits—a subsequent expansion of production"⁶

It is thus quite clear that (a) Marx views the tendency for the rate of profit to fall as a source of capitalist economic crises, and (b) He sees the crises themselves as the means by which the profit rate is restored and renewed capitalist expansion is made possible.

Crises and Cycles

Capitalism is thus viewed as going through economic crises periodically. These crises are situations where capitalists do not make expected profits, but suffer losses or reduced profits and find themselves unable to sell their commodities, and where workers in great numbers are laid off. The crises are the product of certain basic internal contradictions of capitalism—its planless character (disproportionality), the contradictions inherent in the process of development of productive forces (the tendency for the rate of profit to fall) and the contradiction between the rapid capitalist development of social productive power and the limited development of social consuming power (the tendency to under consumption). It is precisely through crises that the conditions are restored whereby capitalist expansion can once again take place. Crises perform this task (a) by allowing elements of fixed and circulating capital to depreciate rapidly in value, both through physical wear and tear during enforced idleness and through steep declines in prices of means of production and (b) by increasing the size of the unemployed reserve army and forcing workers' wages down. Economic crises, then, are both the manifestation of and the typically capitalist "solution" to the basic economic contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. The solution of course is not a conscious solution decided upon by the representatives of the capitalist class, as some conspiracy theories might suggest, but is rather imposed on the capitalist economy by objective laws independent of the will of individuals.

It is to be emphasized that Marxist economics has always recognised alternating periods of capitalist expansion and economic crises as the typical path of development of the capitalist economy. In fact, Marx's theoretical analysis suggests precisely such a pattern as a basic law of motion of capitalism. Such an analysis is in sharp contrast both to contemporary bourgeois economic theory which pretends to discover equilibrium and harmony in the capitalist economy and to petit-bourgeois romantic trends which infer from the contradictory character of the capitalist economy its impossibility.

Crises refer to periods of severe interruption of the 'normal'

process of capitalist reproduction which persist for a considerable time, and imply stagnation or at best very slow growth over many years. Such phases alternate with expansionary phases in the history of capitalism which are characterised by rapid growth of productive forces and extension of markets. Crises therefore have a periodic character. Quite apart from these long period cycles of growth and crisis in alternation, the capitalist economy experiences short-period cycles of ebb and flow of economic activity. These cycles arise mainly from the planless character of capitalism, the problems posed by the durability of capital equipment and price fluctuations due to transitory supply and demand phenomena. These cycles are quite short in terms of their duration and mild in terms of their severity. Bourgeois business cycle analysis has mostly concentrated on these short period fluctuations. Such concepts as "the principle of acceleration", "capacity bottlenecks" and so on, are meant to apply to these phenomena.⁸ It is not in explaining these fluctuations that one brings into the argument the basic contradictions of capitalism.

Money and Credit

In our rather brief and elementary exposition of Marx's economic analysis of capitalism, we have left out many important aspects. Particularly important are the aspects of money and credit. The credit system is especially germane to a discussion of crises. With the development of the capitalist mode of production, the credit system arises to facilitate large-scale capitalist operations and make possible investment of capital in lines of activity where considerable time elapses between the act of investment and the sale of commodities so produced. "Money serves here, by and large, merely as a means of payment, that is, commodities are not sold for money, but for a written promise to pay for whom at a certain date. For brevity's sake we may put all these promissory notes under the head of bills of exchange. Such bills of exchange, in their turn circulate as means of payment until the day on which they fall due."⁹ Bills of exchange, the first form which credit-money takes, thus serve practically as money in transactions among capitalists (though of course they are not legal tender). By so doing, they serve to make capitalist expansion relatively independent of the quality of the money-commodity (such as gold or silver) or of paper currency issued by the government. A further development of the credit system led to the use of bank deposits which are today 'as good as money', that is, widely accepted in the payment for purchases made and in the settlement of debts.

The development of the credit system—from bills of exchange and bank-notes to the well developed banking system of today—greatly facilitates capitalist expansion by economising on the use of cash as such (that is currency and coins) and acting as the lubricant that keeps the

economic wheels of capitalism moving smoothly.

Also, the credit system—which includes not only banks, but also the stock exchange, investment houses and so on, that is the financial machinery of the capitalist mode of production—aids greatly the centralisation of capital especially through the formation of joint stock companies. The formation of such companies—the further growth and development of which has given us today's giant capitalist corporations—is a step of far reaching significance. It makes possible an '...enormous expansion of the scale of production and of enterprises.'⁸ It marks a further important step in the socialization of production. Joint stock capital is in its form "social capital (capital of directly associated individuals)" and the company is a 'social' undertaking. With this step, the owners of capital no longer directly administer the enterprise, but employ a managerial staff for that purpose. Thus we have "the transformation of the actually functioning capitalist into a mere manager . . . and of the owner of capital into a mere owner, a mere money capitalist."⁹ "Finally credit offers to the individual capitalist...absolute control within certain limits over the capital and property of others, and thereby over the labour of others.... The capital itself, which a man really owns or is supposed to own in the opinion of the public, becomes purely a basis for the superstructure of credit...What the speculating whole sale merchant risks is social property, not his own."¹⁰

It is evident that the credit system, by placing huge amounts of capital in the hands of a few capitalists who are themselves owners of only a small part of this capital, encourages many risky ventures, feverish speculation and new modes of swindling. Thereby, it becomes an added source of instability and serves to increase the severity of economic fluctuations. Thus on the one hand the credit system facilitates capitalist development, and on the other, it makes the capitalist economy even more crisis prone: "...the credit system accelerates the material development of the productive forces and the establishment of the world market . . . At the same time credit accelerates the violent eruptions of this contradiction — crises—and thereby the elements of disintegration of the ... (capitalist)mode of production."¹¹

The above fragmentary observations on the credit system are in the nature of general and introductory remarks. It is not possible here to go into the matter in depth and greater detail. It suffices to say that a concrete understanding of the functioning of the world capitalist economy today requires a study of monetary and credit arrangements not only within a nation-state but also (and more importantly) of the international monetary system.¹²

Imperialism and Contemporary Capitalism

We had seen earlier that centralisation of capital is an inherent part of the process of competitive struggle. More and more of existing

social capital flows into the hands of the fewer and fewer victors in this struggle while the vanquished join the ranks of the non-capitalist classes. The credit system also aids the process of centralisation of capital by developing the banking apparatus and its associated instruments, which enable capitalists to borrow many times the amount of the capital they own, and thus operate on a larger scale.

More directly, the banking and credit framework bring about centralisation by providing larger amounts of credit on easier terms to the bigger capitalists, thus enabling them to crush the smaller ones in the competitive struggle. Both the process of capitalist competition as such and the credit system thus lead to the creation of giant capitalist corporations. In each industry, a handful of such corporations come to account for the overwhelming proportion of production and sales. The national economy itself comes to be dominated—in terms of assets, output and sales—by a few hundred such corporations. Later still, a few hundred monopolies come to account for a major portion of global economic activity. Thus competition and credit lead the capitalist model of production to its monopoly stage.

Lenin analysed the development of monopoly capitalism from “classical” or “competitive” capitalism, and called the monopoly stage as the imperialist stage or epoch of capitalism. Basing himself on emerging trends he identified as the essence of imperialism the following features:

- 1 The concentration of production and capital, developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life.

- 2 The merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a financial oligarchy.

- 3 The export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities, becomes of particularly great importance.

- 4 International monopoly combines of capitalists are formed which divide up the world.

- 5 The territorial division of the world by the greatest capitalist powers is completed.¹⁸

Lenin’s characterisation of imperialism pinpoints accurately the essential features of the development of capitalist economies during the period 1870-1914. The trends on which Lenin based himself have largely continued, and today we are at a relatively advanced phase of the imperialist stage. At the same time, important political and economic changes have taken place, which have confirmed Lenin’s view that imperialism is the eve of socialist revolution. While a detailed account and analysis of these developments cannot be made here, some brief remarks may be in order.

The First World War witnessed a turning point in the history of mankind, namely the Great October Socialist Revolution in what is now

the USSR. The capitalist world, having thus "lost" one sixth of the globe, was before long sent into the most severe depression in its history. Between 1929 and 1939, all the capitalist countries (except Nazi Germany after 1935) experienced phenomenally high rates of unemployment and very sharp declines in their levels of economic activity. Only with the onset of the Second World War did unemployment rates begin to go down significantly. Fascism was given a crushing blow in this war which also saw the birth of People's China and the East European People's democracies. Socialism emerged triumphant in China, North Vietnam, North Korea and the East European countries, and capitalism suffered a severe setback. On a world scale at the political, ideological and economic levels, the forces of socialism emerged a great deal stronger than before the war. Within the capitalist world, the 'old' imperialist powers of Europe as also Japan had to accept the hegemonic leadership of American imperialism. Between 1945 and 1970, world capitalism went through an expansionary phase under U S leadership, and aided by phenomenal scientific and technological progress which saw the extensive development of space science, electronics, automation and the whole range of petrochemical industries. Meanwhile fissures of a rather serious nature had developed within the world socialist bloc. We shall not analyse this important political development as well as the other ones here, but instead make a few remarks on the economic features of the contemporary capitalist world economy in the next section.

World Capitalism Today

The trend towards monopoly observed by Lenin—in industry and banking, leading to the fusion of banking and industrial capital that Lenin called 'finance capital'—has continued unabated. Some idea of this can be obtained from the fact, for instance, that 0.5 percent of US manufacturing corporations in 1971 accounted for 35.5 percent of total sales, 50.9 percent of total assets and 61.6 percent of net profit.¹⁴ The figures on employment—0.7 percent of enterprises accounting for 32.8 percent of employment in 1967—tell the same story.¹⁵ The figures for the other advanced capitalist countries are not very different. The capitalist expansion during the two decades following World War II also saw the great merger waves leading to the formation of giant "conglomerates"—capital units that operate in a number of different branches of mining, manufacturing, agribusiness and commerce at once. The centralisation of capital has now reached an unprecedented level.

The revisionists argued that with only a few very large capitalist combines controlling economic life, capitalist economic crises would be a thing of the past. Lenin exposed the hollowness of this argument by pointing out that monopoly does not mean the elimination of competition. Monopoly in individual branches of production is in fact accompanied by intensified competition among capitals regardless of the branches

where they are invested. It is also accompanied by intensified competition among capitalists of the various countries on the world market, and for control over world economy, within each nation-state big capitalist corporations buy out smaller companies and try to seize companies controlled by other corporations through purchase or merger. Internationally, the capitalists based in the advanced capitalist countries utilise to the full their respective state apparatuses in their mutual struggles for markets, raw material sources and investment outlets all over the world.

This brings us to a most striking characteristic of contemporary capitalism, namely the enormous extent of state intervention in national economic life. Historically, of course, the capitalist class has made extensive use of state power ever since its rise to dominance, both to directly guarantee itself high profits via cheap finance, regressive taxation and so on, and to keep the working class down through ideological as well as directly coercive methods. But in the imperialist epoch the, role of the state is considerably enhanced. This is especially the case since the Great Depression (1929-1939) and the so-called Keynesian 'revolution'. The rise of socialism and the development of powerful working class movements in the advanced capitalist countries have made it imperative for the ruling classes of these countries to try and prevent the recurrence of such a depression and its associated mass unemployment. The efforts of the imperialist countries led by the USA to maintain their hegemony in the non-socialist countries, and to pose a constant threat to the socialist countries have also meant increasing state expenditures. The trend is also powerfully reinforced by the increased monopolisation of economic life and the tendency towards the integration of the monopolies and the state. The increased role of the state is reflected both in the share of national product accounted for by the state and in the increased regulation of economic life by the state. This tendency is prominent in all the advanced capitalist countries as well as in most backward capitalist countries.¹⁶ The emergence of powerful transnational monopolies—giant capitalist corporations which carry on production and sales in many countries, though they are controlled by capitalists based in one country—is another important feature of contemporary capitalism. The increasing role of transnational corporations poses a difficult problem for the capitalist state, for it generates new contradictions between different sections of the bourgeoisie. These express themselves primarily in terms of the requirements of national economic policies for keeping unemployment below 'acceptable' levels and providing protection from international competition to the domestic producers on the one hand, and the demands of transnational capital for freer movement of goods, capital and profits across national boundaries. As an illustration, one may cite the American case where domestic steel producers want protection from Japanese and other competitors,

but the America-based transnationals like IBM would want freer international movement of commodities and capital, so that they can penetrate other economies similarly. Government policy aimed at combating severe unemployment runs up against transnational companies that move to Mexico or South Korea or other such places looking for cheap labour.¹⁷

The net effect of all these developments has been to intensify contradictions—both between nation-states trying to protect and strengthen “their” capitalists and within each nation-state between sections of capitalists as well as between the capitalist class and the working class. Some idea of the intensification of class struggle in the advanced capitalist countries (at least at the economic level) may be obtained from the fact that the average annual number of man days lost due to strikes more than doubled between 1951-1955 and 1966-1970. The number of workers involved in strikes increased by 70 percent during the same period.¹⁸ The intensification of inter-imperialist rivalries during the post World War II period is of course well-documented. With the setbacks to its position of unquestioned hegemony that the U.S suffered in the 1960s (when its balance of payments was continuously in the red, and it was being outcompeted in many international markets by Japan and West Germany in particular), it resorted to strong protectionist measures beginning in the early 1970s. With the exhaustion of the long boom by 1970, the world capitalist economy has entered a period of stagnation and has been in the doldrums since then. Predictably, this period has seen intensified competition among the advanced capitalist countries for markets and raw materials as well as investment outlets. It is not possible, however, for us to go into a detailed analysis of the sources of the present world capitalist crisis. It is clear anyway that rapid inflation, severe unemployment, increasing protectionism, intensified rivalry among advanced capitalist countries and political instability all over the capitalist world characterise the situation of world capitalism today.¹⁹

Concluding Comments

The complex of problems mentioned above—and closer home, the problems and prospects of economic and social development in the backward capitalist countries—can only be understood in terms of the Marxist method and standpoint. This method and standpoint is certainly *not* to be understood as just Marxist economic theory. Particularly important are the ideological and political levels of social analysis, and especially so in the period of imperialism wherein these levels acquire considerable independence from the economic level, even though latter is ultimately ‘the determining factor’ as Engels calls it. In our series of articles, we have not only not ventured upon a discussion of these levels but have also provided only an elementary exposition of the outline of

Marx's economic analysis of the capitalist mode of production. It is hoped that the present series of articles would have provided the necessary background to pursue further study, especially of problems that are of importance in our concrete political, historical and social context.²⁰

(Concluded)

A V BALU

¹ K Marx, *Capital*, Moscow, 1967, Vol I, p 575.

² *Ibid.*, pp 580-1.

³ This turn of events may often be accompanied by difficulties in realization as well as due to the operation of the tendency to under-consumption. While theoretically each of these tendencies, as well as disproportionality, can individually contribute to a crisis, the real-world capitalist economic crisis almost invariably is the result of the combined operation of all the three contradictions.

⁴ *Capital* Moscow, 1967, Vol III, p 253.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p 255.

⁶ The 'acceleration principle' may roughly be explained as follows. Let us assume, for example that it takes Rs 3 of investment to increase output annually by Rs 1. Then a given increase in demand for final output generates investment equal to three times that increase. This is however a once-for-all increase in investment and further the equipment thus invested in is of a durable character. So if further increases in demand for final output do not occur, the level of investment goes down. This relationship between investment in fixed equipment and final output (partly technologically determined, partly by prices, wages etc.) together with the durability of the equipment, causes fluctuations in investment and hence in output and thus in the economy as a whole.

⁷ *Capital*, Vol. III, p 400,

⁸ *Ibid.*, p 436.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 436.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 438-9, emphasis in original.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p 441.

¹² A useful reference is A Stadnichenko, *The Monetary Crisis of Capitalism* Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975.

¹³ V I Lenin, *Imperialism* International Publishers New York, 1933, p 81.

¹⁴ The data are from N Inozemtsev, *Contemporary Capitalism: New Developments and Contradictions* Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1974, The book is a useful reference.

¹⁵ N Inozemtsev, *op. cit*

¹⁶ For information and discussion of these points, see N Inozemtsev, *op cit*.

¹⁷ The work of the American economist, R Vernon *Sovereignty At Bay*, New York 1972 may be cited here. Also of interest are E Mandel, *Europe Versus America* Monthly Review Press, New York 1970 and *Late Capitalism* New Left Review, London, 1975.

¹⁸ N Inozemtsev, *op. cit*.

¹⁹ The political, economic and ideological crises are especially severe in backward capitalist countries which form the overwhelming majority of capitalist countries. Integrated as these are into the world capitalist system and its specific international division of labour, their economies are greatly influenced by what happens in the advanced capitalist countries. In this specific sense, they may be called, "dependent capitalist countries". The dependence operates not merely at the economic level but also at the ideological, political and especially cultural levels. But this dependence has to be understood in a *relative* and not absolute sense. That is to say the forces *internal* to these societies are of primary importance in determining the

dynamics of these societies. Their dependence on the advanced capitalist countries operates directly at the economic level and indirectly through attempts at manipulating the internal class alignments and class forces. Some (otherwise) useful references on the relationship between imperialism and under development make the error of treating dependence in an absolute sense. See for instance, S Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale* Monthly Review Press, 1976, Vols. I and II.

²⁰ A useful introduction to the Indian economy (upto independence) is R P Dutt, *India To-day* Calcutta, 1948. For the post independence period, the best introduction is C Bettelheim, *India Independent* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1968.

BOOK REVIEW

Review Article

Pre-History and History of the DMK

MARGUERITE ROSS BARNETT, *THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM IN SOUTH INDIA*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, USA, 1976, pp 368.

This study, based on a voluminous quantity of research and investigative reporting by a black American political scientist, merits detailed review in this journal on grounds of theme, data-base and theoretical significance.

It takes up as its *theme* the national question in Tamil Nadu, a subject of outstanding, ongoing relevance to the historical and political development of India, a subject inadequately researched even by those practically concerned with changing political development in the interests of the working class and the toiling people.

Its *data-base*, very thin in parts; is of uneven quality throughout. Nevertheless Barnett's research does provide a part of the raw material, the incipient perceptions, the background that is necessary for initiating a programme of scientific study of the political development of Tamil Nadu. It does make contact, even if only in a hazy and theoretically unrelated way, with a few aspects of the historical and class reality of Tamil Nadu in the twentieth century.

Its *theoretical significance* seems to us, however, to be of significance by negative example. Barnett's study enables us to focus attention in a concrete way on the results of the application of the stand, viewpoint and method of Western bourgeois political science to a situation where the wood is simply asking to be missed for the trees. The study provides a starting-point, an opportunity, a frame of reference and of polemic for a critical discussion of certain key issues and controversies before the Indian working class and democratic movement.

As an example of empirical political science research into backward societies, Barnett's study of "the development of a nationalist

movement into a political party and eventually a state administration" lacks a serious theoretical standpoint, basis and direction. Its theoretical content is an eclectic mixture of elements from different abstract bourgeois social anthropological, sociological and political science theories.¹

Consequently, the tendency of Barnett's summation and interpretation of her research is to focus on the superficial; to mix up the essential with the inessential, the primary with the secondary, the significant with the trivial. The research is irrevocably split into industrious, but unevenly pursued empirical investigation and an extremely abstract theoretical construct or scheme of 'cultural nationalist' and political behaviour. The split can never be bridged, hence the problem that Barnett appears to take up — the national question in Tamil Nadu as it manifested itself in the politics of a multi-national society — can never be resolved, within the academic-ideological framework she accepts.

CRITIQUE OF THEORETICAL COMPONENT

Our basic critique of Barnett's study is that, in its eclectic mixture of abstract, schematic theory and empiricism, it obscures and diverts attention from the main direction and the essential trends of the political development of Madras Presidency (and, in the process, of the Indian sub-continent) in the period under study. It follows that the study cannot establish a serious connection between 'cultural nationalism' and the essential aspects of political development in the Madras Presidency.

To start with, Barnett's study does not really face head-on the question of the awakening to national life of the Tamil people under British rule. The national question in Tamil Nadu—and on the Indian sub-continent—is not seen primarily as a part of the national-colonial question, as an integral part of the experience of the people's struggle against British imperialist rule. Rather, the anti-imperialist direction in which the national question developed is implicitly denied in a study which mixes up irreconcilable theoretical conceptions of caste, class, nationality, political identity and ideology.

Elite non-Brahmins ranged against Brahmins and hence the origins of Tamil 'cultural nationalism'. Forward non-Brahmin opposition to the backward non-Brahmins and Untouchables, backward non-Brahmins ranged against Untouchables and other backward social groups; the fragmentation of the non-Brahmin movement and emergence of the demand for Dravida Nadu. The development of 'cultural nationalism' from movement to party, along the path of pragmatic bread-and-butter existence. It is as though British imperialist oppression and its invidious policy of 'divide and rule' did not dominate this historical period. It is as though the Tamil people—understood by the author in terms of sweeping mega-caste categories—and the people of various nationalities on the Indian sub-continent were not rising with growing sweep, militancy and success against their enemy, British imperialism!

Barnett is clearly incapable of establishing any theoretical connection between the development of a Tamil nationality and developing capitalism; between the awakening to life of the Tamils as a nationality and the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal stirrings and struggles of the masses; between the democratic posing of the national question in terms of overthrowing imperialism and eliminating national inequality and special privileges and the slogan of nationalism and 'national culture' employed by the indigenous bourgeoisie, partly against imperialism, partly (in alliance with landlords) to drug the minds of the toiling people and to divert them from the path of revolutionary class struggle.

Barnett understands the process of nationality formation and nationalism apart from their real historical and class context. She makes a schematic distinction between 'cultural nationalism' and 'territorial nationalism'; and reduces Tamil nationalism, by sheer bookish assertion to 'cultural nationalism', that is, something less than full-fledged national consciousness. Tamil nationalism, according to Barnett,

... is not territorial but cultural nationalism. The cultural nationalist sees the nation as inherent in the group of people who possess certain cultural characteristics; and so, while the territorial nationalist gives priority to the direct relationship of the individual to the territorially defined nation state, the cultural nationalist gives priority to collective cultural realisation through nationalism. Cultural nationalists within a culturally heterogeneous territorial state are likely to stress equality of individuals.²

Imposing Theory on the Facts

Why the real process of nationality formation and national awakening is reduced to a discredited, alien bourgeois slogan³ is not at all made clear. Nowhere in her study does Barnett attempt to substantiate her assertion that Tamil nationalism is merely 'cultural nationalism'. Here, then, is an *abstract theoretical imposition* whose function is to cut off the Tamil nationality and Tamil national consciousness from their soil and to turn them into an invisible, self-contained force. It must be emphasised that the concept or slogan of 'cultural nationalism' is completely alien to this context. It is not derived from life; it is a bookish concoction. The Western political scientist introduces it in a context where nobody is known to have thought in these terms, or raised this slogan in any recognisable sense. The theoretical construct of developing cultural nationalism has no reference to a living and active nationality striving along with other nationalities, to break free from the shackles of imperialism and feudalism. Nor does the author attempt to relate the slogans of nationalism to any particular class. Barnett's Tamil cultural nationalism, lacking class content and premised on Hans Kohn's vulgar-abstract schema of nationalism,⁴ is clearly an imagined state of mind. It relates to the research in the role of an *academic*

mystique.

It is precisely here that the *rift* between abstract, bookish theory and worthwhile empirical work lies. Although Barnett starts off by claiming to "analyse the social, political and economic factors that gives rise to (Tamil) cultural nationalism," she attempts to do no such thing. The theory does influence the work of empirical generalisation, does interfere with it, does become a real obstacle to the interpretation of the data. The main task of the reviewer becomes, consequently, to rescue the worthwhile empirical material scattered in the study from its theoretical pretensions and to attempt to interpret it in a way relevant to the theme taken up for study: the national question in Tamil Nadu and its relation to political development in the twentieth century.

CRITIQUE OF EMPIRICAL COMPONENT

As a frame of reference for empirical research, the umbrella function of cultural nationalism is to bring together empirical perceptions of various streams and trends in the historical and political development of modern Tamil society (imprisoned by British colonialism along with sections of the Telugu, Kannada and Malayalee nationalities into a politically and administratively convenient division, the Madras Presidency) in the twentieth century. It brings together, or rather mixes up:

A distorted understanding of the process of awakening of Tamil national life, of the formation of a Tamil national consciousness, as an integral part of the development of the national-colonial question on the Indian sub-continent.

A superficial understanding of the character, social basis and the leadership of the freedom movement in its development over the period; a naive understanding of the 'Non-Brahmin Movement' and its relation to the Justice Party.

A failure to understand clearly the pro-imperialist and anti-national role of the Justice Party and the class interests it represented.

An inadequate appreciation of the stirrings of the toiling people belonging to backward and untouchable castes against social oppression.

A partially useful, but confused picture of the 'Radical Social Reform' or Self-Respect Movement, the trends within it, its positive and negative aspects, its later tendency and direction.

An empirically useful picture of the formation of the DK (Dravida Kazhagam), its aims and development, its split into two irreconcilable political trends.

An empirically useful, in part enlightening study of the formation of the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) its development as a movement and party winning a rapidly expanding mass base.

A superficial understanding of the DMK's ideology and class policies

as a rising opposition to the Congress; and a philistine understanding of the DMK's ideology and class policies as a Party in power.

The material, generalised and organised in four parts⁶ by the author, falls broadly under two heads, the 'origins of cultural nationalism' or the pre-history of the DMK, and the 'politics of cultural nationalism' or the development of the DMK in opposition and in power.

Pre-History of the DMK

The data, the study contributes to the real origins of Tamil national awakening and nationalism is extremely thin and of dubious quality. There is no serious attempt to relate the origin of Tamil nationalism to the historical process which began in the early years of the nineteenth century: the process of development of the different peoples of India into nationalities side by side with the rise and development of capitalism. The process of nationality formation which was first evident in the maritime regions of Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century. The emergence of national consciousness, the development of literatures in the local languages, and the awakened interest in the past were an integral part of this larger historical process.

Beyond stating casually that "politicisation of these ancient (Tamil) cultural symbols was a concomitant of social change associated with modernisation"; beyond noting in passing, that "prior to the twentieth century intercaste relations in South India involved competition, conflict and cooperation between or among *jatis* (endogamous caste units) in localised village or district areas"; and beyond noting, from Irschick that the very concept of Dravidian-ness, or the idea of the cultural unity and integrity of South India based on a Dravidian past, was first postulated by European missionaries and encouraged by British officials, Barnett's study contributes nothing to our empirical knowledge of the actual origins of Tamil nationalism.

Nor does Barnett's factual contribution to our knowledge of the history of the Non-Brahmin Movement, the Justice Party and the Brahmin non-Brahmin issue take us very much beyond the philistine empirical work of Eugene Irschick.⁶ In fact, the skimpy factual material available in this section is forced into a naively hypothesised tension between two abstract-behavioural models, the 'Brahmanic' model and the 'Kingly' model.⁷ According to Barnett, the first model emphasises variables related to ritual status, that is orthodoxy and orthopraxy; while the second model, based on land ownership and economic dominance, stresses command over village labour.

Brahmins, of course, gradually approached the Brahmanic model. Major forward non-Brahmins could be located on a continuum defined by the extent to which their conduct exemplified the ideological and behavioural patterns characteristic of the Brahmanic model. Backward

non-Brahmins and Untouchables could be located on a continuum ranging from conduct emphasising the 'Kingly' model (for example, Maravars with their martial tradition and Chettiars with their business interests) and ending with Untouchables who had extremely limited scope for being fitted into either the 'Brahmanic' or the 'Kingly' model.

What, according to Barnett, were the socio-economic and political changes that propelled elite non-Brahmins into a non-Brahmin and Dravidian identity? As forward non-Brahmins became increasingly urbanised as modern occupational preferences penetrated the countryside, these elite non-Brahmins resorted to new socially productive comparisons: they unfavourably compared their twentieth-century position with their position in the pre-British era; they unfavourably compared their opportunities with those of Brahmins.

A joint product of these streams of unfavourable comparison was the perception that elite non-Brahmin value capabilities (goods and conditions of life which people think they are capable of getting and keeping) were not commensurate with their value expectations (goods and conditions of life to which they believe they are rightfully entitled). An idealized ideological standard of Dravidian-ness took shape, a standard of spontaneous past achievement and excellence, a standard from which the existing 'downtrodden' state of 'non-Brahmins' fell short. In other words, disjunctions between what existed and an ideological construct of inherent Dravidian-ness formed a growingly important aspect of the Dravidian movement during the era of cultural nationalism.

Barnett sees the Tamil Nadu political landscape during this early period of cultural nationalism dominated by the movement of two elite groups, Brahmins and elite non-Brahmins, in divergent ideological directions. Brahmins tended predominantly to involve themselves in Home Rule organisations and to propagate territorial nationalism. Non-Brahmin elites tended to reject Home Rule and territorial nationalism; they tended to emphasise the primacy of Dravidian cultural authenticity, a common non-Brahmin identity, an incipient Dravidian cultural nationalism. This schematic dichotomisation of socio-economic elites into a Brahmin elite non-Brahmin model tension, assumed to be crucial to the origins of Tamil nationalism and to the emergence of a Dravidian identity, claims to set itself in a larger context of socio-economic and political change.

The Historical Context

Let us look briefly at the quality of the data provided on this larger socio-economic and political context. The interesting data provided on the dominance of Brahmins in University education for the period 1870-1918 and the reference to Brahmin dominance in the administrative arena is already available in Irschick.⁸ No material is available here on the specific factors leading to the formation of the South

India Liberal Federation (Justice Party) in 1916. No attempt is made here to identify the real interests represented by the Justice Party, its relation to British imperialism and to the freedom movement. The only new information Barnett provides is related to some personal experiences of P T Rajan, the Justice Party leader, and to certain writings by 'elite' non-Brahmins which, focussing ire on forward Brahmins and utilising the research on Dravidians by European scholars, began to elaborate a 'counter-cultural tradition'.

Obviously, the dichotomisation of socio-economic 'elites' into a Brahmin-elite non-Brahmin model tension has some reference to the process of overall historical change in South India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But since there is no attempt to research into and identify the main direction of socio-economic change, and the class reality in Tamil Nadu during a period encompassing the origin, rise and development of capitalism, Barnett's schema sweeping the surface-reality, misses what goes on beneath.

No sensible connection or relation is established between the position of different classes and castes. There is no attempt to conceptualise theoretically the social reality of *caste* in this context. There is no attempt to differentiate, in real historical terms, essentially different classes marked by the caste configuration and by caste labels. While there can be no doubt that in social terms, Brahmin castehood involved special privileges and an invidious arrogation of ritual social position, there is no justification for failing to go deeper to the real place of different sections within Brahmanic castes in the production process. The prominence of Brahmin landlords in Thanjavur, noted in a footnote by the author,⁹ is evidently considered exceptional. The prominence of Kallidaikuruchi Brahmins as usurers and indigenous bankers in a part of the Presidency¹⁰ is not even noted in a footnote. Nor is the probably unexceptional presence of Brahmin interests in trade and, to a lesser extent, in industry.¹¹ Similarly, no attempt is made to identify the actual class position of 'elite non-Brahmins' in different parts of the Presidency; there is not a scrap of information on the position of 'non-Brahmin' landlords in, say Thanjavur District, or in any other part of Tamil Nadu.

As a superficial researcher, Barnett misses the fact that at the stage of political development she is examining in this section the *well to do intelligentsia* played an exceedingly prominent role in bourgeois nationalist organisations. She fails to understand the social origins of this intelligentsia in the Madras Presidency and the way in which this section developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since Brahmins formed a disproportionately high and relatively privileged proportion of this intelligentsia in the Presidency, it is all too easy for her to identify Brahmins with the politics of nationalism and forward non-Brahmins with the politics of loyalty to the Raj. Consequently, she cannot place the issue of Brahmin dominance in education and

administrative employment as well as the slogan of 'non-Brahmin advance' in any data-based frame of historical reference.

The Role of the Raj

What is incomparably worse, Barnett fails to see the role of the Raj in sponsoring and encouraging casteism and communalism. British imperialism clearly had a political stake in this practice, which was actively adapted to the soil on which it was developed. British imperialism did not make Barnett's mistake of *really* identifying 'Brahmin political involvement' with nationalism, 'non-Brahmin elites' with loyalty to the Raj and 'cultural nationalism', and backward Non-Brahmins and Untouchables with a lack of involvement in either the freedom movement or cultural nationalism.¹³ The events of 1905-1908 all over India and the events of February-March 1908 in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli in particular must have been too fresh in its memory to permit any such illusion. The militant masses who rallied around V O Chidambaram Pillai and Subramania Siva—drawn largely from the working class, the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia—could not by any stretch of the imagination be fitted into caste-based political models such as 'Brahmin domination' and 'non-Brahmin non-involvement' in the freedom movement.

British imperialist policy, based on astute class interests, was a conscious policy of dividing the peoples of India in order to prevent them from rallying to the freedom struggle. It found and developed on this soil extensively complex elements of caste, communalism and social obscurantism; it built upon this basis, it actively seized upon and encouraged the retrograde, it promoted slogans designed to divert the masses from the struggle for independence, it even won certain tactical successes through such methods. The policy of 'divide and rule' could not, however, withstand the challenge of the freedom movement indefinitely. Repeatedly, the mass basis and sweep of the freedom movement made nonsense of the well-publicised assumption that in this society Muslim would stay divided from Hindu, forward non-Brahmin from Brahmin, backward non-Brahmin from forward non-Brahmin, Untouchable from all the other castes. The growing unity of the masses in struggle was undermining the very foundations of imperialist rule in India and, along with these foundations, dogmas of unalterable caste-based political behaviour which was supposed to be inherent in these 'natives'.

Periyar and the Politics of Madras Presidency

The failure of British imperialism to halt or stem the rising tide of the freedom movement was reflected in the specific political development of the Madras Presidency in the 1920s and 1930s: the failure of the anti-national Justice Party with its slogan of 'Non-Brahminism' to win

the support of the masses on the one hand, and the protracted and complex development of the bourgeois-led freedom movement of the people on the other. Barnett obscures the essence of this political development.

Barnett's empirical material on the Self-Respect League founded in 1925 is far more worthwhile. Her attempt, however, to grasp the relation of the Self-Respect Movement to the Justice Party and to the politics of independence is unsuccessful because of theoretical incompetence combined with the impressionistic and uneven character of the empirical data.

Barnett does throw some new light on the political activities of EV Ramasami, the leader of the Self-Respect Movement. As a youth boldly violating caste-based rules of social behaviour; as a young man who sought and failed to find the personal and social answers he was looking for in sanyasihood and religion; as an ardent Congressman who campaigned wholeheartedly for independence and social reform and spent a personal fortune as part of his commitment to the freedom movement and to social reform; as a Congressman alienated by the high-caste prejudice and social obscurantism of the Congress upholding the banner of social reform and, following a visit to the Soviet Union, campaigning with short-lived enthusiasm in support of communism and organising conferences against landlordism; as a leader of the Self-Respect League falling, tragically, into the trap of collaboration with the anti-national Justice Party; as the leader and publicist of a separatist movement demanding Dravida Nadu and campaigning against northern domination and the imposition of Hindi; as the leader of a Justice Party completely discredited among the people; as the founder-leader of the Dravida Kazhagam collaborating with British imperialism against the freedom movement; as a tragic figure railing against the transfer of power, characterising Independence Day as a 'Day of Mourning' and demanding 'freedom from Brahmin Raj'; as a supporter of the newly formed Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and an enemy of the Congress Ministry headed by C Rajagopalachari; as a supporter of the 'Kamaraj Congress' seen as representing the interests of 'real Tamilians'; as a supporter of the DMK in power; as an idol-breaker who, towards the end of his long life, polemicised against and rejected the Tamil language and Tamil culture set up as idols; as a militant propagandist of social reform divorced from class analysis and from a scientific theory of economic and political change — the rich, many-sided, outrageously inconsistent life of this *Periyar* (Great Elder) of Tamil Nadu politics seems to embody in bold relief many of the specific historical features of the political development of the land of the Tamils over half a century.

The biographical detail that Barnett puts together on *Periyar* provides insights into the weaknesses, the inconsistencies, the vacillations and the contradictions of the bourgeois leadership of the freedom

movement. The failure to win over and keep this outstanding individual and his followers within the camp of the freedom movement is a measure of the failure of this leadership to provide consistently democratic answers to the key issues of the day. This particular contradiction, which could be sharply discerned in the split between the Extremists and the Moderates of the 1905-1908 period, was expressed in a more refined and developed form in Gandhism: its essence lay in what R P Dutt characterised as "the disastrous combination of political radicalism and social reaction in India."¹⁸

The dominant section of the bourgeois leadership of the freedom movement sought to build the movement on the basis of social conservatism. It extolled orthodox Hinduism and the supposed superiority of the ancient Hindu or 'Aryan' civilisation to modern 'Western' civilisation. Instead of leading the people forward along the path of fighting unity and emancipation — away from the evil relics of the past — the nationalist leaders appeared,

in practice as the champions of social reaction and superstition, of caste division and privilege, as the allies of all the 'black forces', seeking to hold down the antiquated pre-British social and ideological fetters upon the people in the name of a highflown mystical 'national' appeal.¹⁴

This policy, "vicious in principle mistaken in tactics,"¹⁵ clearly weakened the advance of the political consciousness and clarity of the movement and divided the advancing forces. It was this division, tearing at the hearts of many of the best elements initially drawn into the freedom movement, which was vividly illustrated in the case of E V Ramasami. This man of exceptionally strong character showed in his youth a real commitment to the goal of freedom and made personal sacrifices in the advance towards this goal: there is firm evidence to show that his alienation from the freedom movement in the mid-1920s was, at least partly, a result of sensitively observed and deeply felt resentment against the attitude of caste division and privilege that the dominant section of the Congress leadership brought into politics in the Presidency.

The public life of *Periyar* is equally a measure of the tragic failure of the outstanding individual to respond in a scientific and consistently democratic way to the key public and political issues posed before him.¹⁶ Alienated from the freedom movement, yet upholding the banner of radical social reform, *Periyar* drifted into shameful collaboration with British imperialism¹⁷ which, as we have already seen, was no real enemy of social reaction and obscurantism in India.

Barnett, dealing with highly revealing biographical material, fails to subject it to a scientific historical examination. She fails to lay her finger on the essential aspects of political development reflected in the life and views of E V Ramasami. She fails to grasp the fact that the

contradictions in E V Ramasami's life and doctrines expressed the contradictory conditions of real life and political development in the Madras Presidency in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Barnett also obscures the fact that in its social determinedness and content, the Self-Respect Movement which appropriated the slogan of 'Non-Brahminism' covered two essentially divergent tendencies. These tendencies diverged sharply in terms of philosophical-social outlook, although politically they made common cause with the Justice Party.

It is certainly no small qualitative distinction that it involved between the 'moderate' and 'radical' positions which Barnett uncritically identifies within the 'Radical Social Reform Movement'. The qualitative distinction is between a revivalist-idealist position that claimed to return to the spiritual, religious and social roots of an idealized Dravidian past and a crudely atheistic, metaphysically materialist attack on religious and social obscurantism led by E V Ramasami. The first trend, fitfully espoused by the leadership of the Justice Party, faded away with the decline and demise of that Party. The second trend, carried forward actively and militantly by E V Ramasami and to a lesser extent by C N Annadurai, outlived the Justice Party and influenced political development in Tamil Nadu after Independence. In an atmosphere charged with suffocating remnants of superstition and religious obscurantism, of caste division and privilege; this revolt against Brahmanical Hinduism and *varnas-hrama dharma* had an important positive role. If the movement served to divert people's consciousness, energy and organisation from class issues the primary explanation is that the theoretical and practical work of those charged with the historic responsibility of focussing on class issues of developing the class struggle towards successful democratic and socialist revolution was too weak to prevent the people from being so diverted. Some of the more perceptive leaders of the working class movement and party critically grasped the positive and democratic elements in *Periyar's* contribution while evaluating his pro-British political position and his opportunist role following the transfer of power. Some others were carried away to the extent of considering *Periyar* one-sidedly as a great revolutionary fighter. When the working class party and movement as a whole comes to a serious historical self-criticism and evaluation of its work, it is likely to explain the connection between its line and practice and the specific ideological-political alternative to Congress dominance and Congress rule that emerged and developed in Tamil Nadu.

Barnett's identification of the essential difference between *Periyar* and the working class movement as a difference centreing on 'Brahmin domination' of the Communist Party reflects an absurdly superficial and false understanding which refuses to go beyond *Periyar's* words and see the profound differences in class outlook, ideology and practice that separated him from the working class movement.

The Influence of the Working Class

Barnett, in fact, completely misses the significance of the role of the working class in the freedom movement in the period 1918-1947 and the qualitative change brought about when the political line and practice of the working class began to contend — given all its limitations — with the political line and practice of the bourgeoisie. *She is unable to see the political and practical differences between the bourgeois and proletarian approaches to the national question.* The working class movement consistently championed the demand of the various nationalities on the Indian sub-continent for independence from British rule, for ending national inequalities and privileges, for ending the system of Provincial rule, for the establishment of states based on the nationality principle.

While demarcating its standpoint from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois slogans of separatism, the working class movement has demanded a solution to the national question on the basis of a frank recognition of the multi-national character of India and of the principle of national equality. It has approached the bourgeois slogan of 'national culture' by pointing out, in the first place, that its significance in a given situation is determined not by some petty intellectual promise or intention but by the objective alignment of class forces; that, secondly, this 'national culture' refers to the dominant culture of the exploiting classes.

In Tamil Nadu in the twentieth century, there became increasingly evident two irreconcilable cultures, the *culture of the bourgeoisie and the landlords* and the *culture of the cruelly, often barbarically, oppressed and exploited toiling people*.¹⁸ The latter contained, in however rudimentary a form, live democratic and socialist cultural elements. The development of the industrial working class was the leading factor in the development of the democratic and socialist culture; the process of differentiation among the peasantry throwing growing numbers into the ranks of the rural poor and intensifying the class contradictions in the countryside strengthened the objective basis for the development of this culture.

If the bourgeoisie and the landlords — drawn initially from the top sections of the upper castes, by and large — appropriated the slogan of 'Tamil culture' or 'Dravidian-ness' and used it to mobilise the masses behind them, it must also be recognised that the democratic and rudimentary socialist elements in Tamil culture and society repeatedly asserted themselves in political life. This became increasingly evident as the oppressed classes provided the developing basis for the freedom movement, as they increasingly fought against social and cultural degradation and economic exploitation.

To the extent it drew attention to the social and cultural oppression of the masses of the people of the non-Brahmin and lower castes, the radical trend represented by E V Ramasami within the Self-Respect Movement identified itself with the assertion of the democratic cultural

elements in Tamil society. It articulated in its early career a radical petty-bourgeois challenge to the social and cultural foundations of this order. But it could not sustain its social radicalism consistently, much less extend it to the sphere of politics. Confronted in real life with the contradictions and dual character of bourgeois nationalism and with the vacillation and inconsistency of the petty bourgeoisie, the radical trend within the Self-Respect Movement took a giant step backward — collaborating with the Justice Party representing the interests of the landlords and the declining comprador bourgeoisie and entering into a reactionary alliance with imperialism. Its class character changed accordingly. Later on, in independent India, the remnants of the trend within the self-Respect Movement represented by *Periyar* took strikingly inconsistent political positions and served the ruling classes in a typically opportunist way. Since Barnett is not concerned with the social determinedness and the class roots of this phenomenon in Tamil Nadu politics, she is unable to examine its contradictory character and historical role scientifically.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DMK

Barnett places the emergence of the DMK in the context of mass mobilisation of the backward castes during the 1940s — which transformed the character of the political arena in the Madras Presidency and determined the essential constraints on radical politics. Her narrative is as follows: The orientation of the backward castes was towards maintaining their position in the face of competition from Untouchables and other backward social groups. Their status was threatened not by the wealthy landlord or the proud and orthodox Brahmin, but by the previously subservient Untouchable. The symbols of sudra statues, so important in shaping a radical support structure for the Dravidian movement, were irrelevant for the backward castes. The formation of the Dravida Kazhagam out of the discredited Justice Party in 1944 was a concession to the mood of the times. It was an attempt to link the Dravidian Movement with increasingly anti-British feelings without going so far as to demand independence. The party made a pointed appeal to newly mobilising social groups, particularly backward castes. Its Dravidian ideology subsumed economic oppression to ritual and cultural oppression.

Two conflicting trends developed in the Dravidian Movement. One trend represented by the autocratic leader, *Periyar*, set itself in direct opposition to the movement for Indian independence and demanded freedom from 'Brahmin Raj'. The other trend, led by Annadurai, expressed itself in support of freedom from foreign yoke even while it demanded freedom from the Congress yoke. The two trends moved irrevocably towards a split between 1947 and 1949 despite conciliatory moves. Following 71-year-old *Periyar's* decision to marry a 22-year-old woman, Annadurai and his supporters left the DK and formed a new

political party. The final split of 1949 was caused by divergent views on electoral participation and political style.

This narrative evidently makes contact with some aspects of the emergence of the DMK. The party was certainly born in a period of 'mass mobilisation', when it was clear that the DK's pro-British political record was out of tune with the people's mood. But what was the nature of this mass mobilisation and what was its content? Barnett's sweeping assertion that the backward castes did not revolt against economic and social oppression by high-caste landlords and by Brahminism and that they felt threatened by the Untouchables and by other backward castes reflects an obsession with the surface-reality that totally obscures the essence of real social and political development.

Period of Political Advance

The superficiality of Barnett's understanding appears all the more striking in that it relates to a period characterised by a great political advance in different parts of India, including Madras Presidency. In the period 1937-39, the working class of India conducted several extensive strikes for better conditions and for national and social emancipation.¹⁹ A prominent feature of the labour movement in this period was solidarity strike-action and joint worker-peasant demonstrations which succeeded in forging the unity of the working people irrespective of religion, caste or nationality. The organised trade union movement made rapid strides in the Madras Presidency, particularly in the Coimbatore industrial centre.²⁰ The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) increased its strength among the organised working class, made inroads into the strength of other unions and became the rallying centre of the whole labour movement. A distinctive feature of working class action during this period was the clearly political character of the demands raised by the vanguard sections.

The period 1937-39 was marked also by the increased strength of the organised peasant movement, reflected in an increase in the membership of the All-India Kisan-Sabha (AIKS).²¹ The advance was particularly striking in Malabar District in the Madras Presidency.²² Following the formation of the Congress Ministry headed by Rajagopalachari in July 1937, the rural poor under the leadership of the All Malabar Karshaka Sangham launched mass struggles against landlordism and for agrarian reform. The actions of the peasantry, which clearly exposed the class character of the Congress Party and in particular its inability to carry out election promises, played an important role in bringing about the final split within the Congress party between the 'left' and the 'right' and the emergence of an influential Communist Party in Malabar. The increased mobilisation of agricultural labourers and poor peasants, the bulk of whom belonged to the lower and Untouchable castes, was a feature of mass organisation in only a limited part of the Presidency and

in general, did not occur in the Tamil-speaking areas. Yet it represented an emerging trend that certainly had an impact on the political configuration and the political development of the Presidency.

The struggle of nationalities in demanding an end to the hated system of Provinces and the formation of states based on the nationality principle was particularly advanced in South India during this period. The growth of mass political activity that followed the formation of the provincial governments stimulated the national movements of Andhra, Kerala and Karnataka and in an entirely different way, the national movement in Tamil Nadu. The Congress leadership paid lip-service to the right of nationalities to form independent states, but opposed broad mass movements in support of these demands. It must also be remembered that students in the Presidency became an organised force in the fight for Independence, democracy and socialism during this period. Barnett completely misses the essence of this political development: the growing initiative, organisation and consciousness of the working class, and the toiling and democratic masses in fighting against political, economic and social oppression.

It is true that the outbreak of the Second World War affected the growth and development of the fighting movements of the toiling and democratic masses, and in particular the activity and membership of the Kisan Sabha.²³ Nevertheless the War did not stop or reverse the activity of the mass and democratic organisations. The protest movement against India's involvement in the imperialist war developed on a broad scale and a spontaneous demonstration by workers in Madras on the first day of the war was a striking feature of this protest.²⁴ Unrest among the peasantry demanding lower rent and a moratorium on debts manifested itself chiefly in Andhra and in the Malabar District in the Presidency. The struggle of the nationalities for the formation of autonomous states based on the nationality principle assumed particularly acute forms among the non-Tamil nationalities in the Province.

The change in the character of the war into a People's War and the lifting of the ban on the Communist Party encouraged the development of the kisan and trade union movements. The All India Kisan Sabha steadily increased its membership in the last three years of the war.²⁵ In South India, especially in Andhra and Kerala, the Kisan Sabha led the struggle of the tenants and agricultural labourers against oppression by landlords and moneylenders and against hunger and eviction. It was during this period that the Kisan Sabha and the Communist movement began to take root among the untouchable agricultural labourers of East Thanjavur.²⁶

With the end of the war and the rout of the fascist aggressors, the class contradictions within the country sharpened tremendously. The transfer of power came in a situation of unprecedented mass revolutionary upsurge. This upsurge was characterised by peasant revolts, general

strikes of workers, students' strikes, the mass struggles of the peoples of the 'Native States' and, above all, by the direct involvement of the armed forces in the anti-imperialist movement. Madras Presidency was an active scene of this mass revolutionary upsurge. Militant demonstrations by workers, students and the petty bourgeois masses in solidarity with the Bombay RIN struggle in February 1946, the militant strike struggle of the South Indian Railway workers in August-September 1946, the general strike of the Coimbatore textile workers in November, the struggles of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants of Malabar—this anti-imperialist and revolutionary upsurge of the toiling and democratic masses profoundly affected the character of the political arena in the Presidency, ushered in independence, and provided the background in which the 'Dravidian Movement' had to work out its line and programme of action.

Obscuring the Essence

It is an absurd caricature that reduces the 'mass mobilisation' of the late thirties and forties—which provided the setting for the birth of the DMK—to the mobilisation of backward castes for patronage, for "a greater share of government appointments, power and influence". In fact, it is not really meaningful to speak of the 'backward castes' as a sweeping mega-caste bloc, although it must be noted that the role of specific backward caste organisations and leaders in the politics of the Presidency was certainly not insignificant. To speak of the behaviour of 'backward castes' in socio-psychological terms is to obscure the essence of the political development of the period: *the intensification of class contradictions and the increasing political initiative and involvement of the toiling and democratic masses drawn from varied castes.*

The edge of this initiative and involvement through the late 1930s and through most of the 1940s was directed against imperialism. This is not at all to deny specific weaknesses in the organisation and consciousness of the toiling and democratic people in the Madras Presidency or in India as a whole; or the fact that particular sections among the people belonging to the backward and untouchable castes were driven by an oppressive social order and influenced by caste leaders to fall victims to the British imperialist policy of 'divide and rule'. Such weaknesses and setbacks in the anti-imperialist and democratic movement must be examined in a scientific historical perspective.

That Barnett lacks any such perspective becomes clear when she uses an isolated British record on demonstrators detained in the Madras Presidency during the 'Quit India' movement of 1942 as evidence of the non-involvement of the backward castes and untouchables in the freedom movement. The specific record giving the mega-caste classification of male political prisoners detained under the Defence of India Rules is interesting enough, although not for the reasons Barnett mentions. It

reveals, in relation to proportion of the population, an extreme over-representation of Brahmins, an over-representation of forward non-Brahmins, an under-representation of backward non-Brahmins and a lack of representation of Untouchables.²⁷ The quality of Barnett's historical perspective becomes clear when, instead of soberly evaluating the significance of this movement in the freedom struggle, she characterises the Congress misadventure as representing the highest point in the struggle. It must be remembered that the Congress High Command disclaimed all responsibility for the 'Quit India' incidents; the Congress leadership of this movement represented a leadership confused, divided and demoralised. The record kept by the enemy on those detained during this period is certainly not a reliable indicator of the character of the people's active involvement in the freedom movement.

A serious historical investigation, using newspaper reports, official records, published accounts and interviews, would certainly have provided worthwhile data making it possible to gauge the active involvement of the masses in the freedom struggle during different phases of its development and over different points of time. Barnett, however, does not even seem to be aware that the transfer of power occurred in a setting of revolutionary mass upsurge, which could not leave even something as exceptional as the 'politics of cultural nationalism' untouched.

It is clear that the large-scale mobilisation of the masses of the people, including those belonging to the backward and Untouchable castes, on the issue of 'Tamil culture' and social reform was a distinctive feature of the late 1930s and the 1940s. The Dravidian Movement's work among the masses had helped to identify the issues and methods that could be taken up and turned effectively against the Congress. The Congress, which had used 'agitational politics' in the Presidency, was itself confronted by a substantial mass-based agitation centring on opposition to the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory subject in certain schools in 1938. The language issue as part of the national question in Tamil Nadu proved a highly sensitive and convenient political rallying point to the Dravidian Movement following the debacle of the 1936 elections. The agitation was concentrated in the Tamil districts of the Presidency and helped to develop agitation and propaganda techniques that were later to be developed as powerful weapons against the Congress regime. The most significant event accompanying the language agitation was the raising of the demand for a separate Dravida Nadu. This issue united different sections within the Dravidian Movement, provided a temporary focus to it, and mobilised substantial sympathy outside the organisations of the Movement. The language agitation was certainly a foretaste of what was to come, nearly three decades later, for the Congress Party—which showed that it had learnt nothing from the experience.

For the Dravidian Movement as a whole, the most positive result

of the experience of work among the masses on national, cultural and social reform issues was the emergence of serious differences within. The forward-looking section led by C N Annadurai responded to the mood of the times by opposing the political line, methods and practice of Periyar.

THE 'RADICAL PERIOD'

Barnett's narrative of the early years of the DMK provides some worthwhile insights into the party's character and methods of work among the masses of the Tamil people. The picture that emerges is as follows: the DMK took away 75 percent of the rank-and-file membership from the parent body. During the early period, it was difficult to differentiate the DMK's ideology from the DK's: the essential feature of this ideology was the subsuming of economic oppression to ritual and cultural oppression. But the organisational structure of the new party was different. A more democratic inner-party structure was certainly a feature of the early DMK.

The party's decision-making power was vested in the General Council and its primary organisational unit was the branch. In the early phase of building the DMK, the leadership tended to concentrate on propaganda activities without adequate organisational follow-up. M Karunanidhi, later Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, was an exception to this trend: he grasped the importance of organisation at the grass roots and was quick to follow up the interest aroused by public meetings and cultural activities by organising functioning branches.

Experience with Electoral Politics

The early DMK confronted a ruling party afflicted by inner-party strife and factionalism. The Congress had won an overwhelming victory in the elections in the Madras Presidency in 1946, winning 165 out of 205 seats. The split between the ministerial wing and the organisational wing of the party resulted in successive changes in leadership of the legislative party between 1946 and 1952. Kamaraj emerged as the most powerful boss of the Congress organisation during this period controlling the most powerful faction within the party.

Following the adoption of a new constitution for independent India, the first election based on universal manhood suffrage was held. With the pattern of its social support skewed towards the upper castes in the 1940s, the Congress was unable to win the decisive electoral victories of 1936 and 1946. Several ministers were defeated and the Congress Party strength was reduced to 152 out of 375. The opposition alliance spearheaded by the Communist Party netted a majority of seats.

The DMK, which lacked an adequate organisational basis, did not contest the 1952 elections directly, although, it did identify itself with

the opposition camp. It openly supported candidates willing to sign a pledge that they would support and work for the ideals of the DMK in the Assembly. It actively campaigned for the victory of candidates from the Commonweal and Tamil Nad Toilers parties, essentially caste-based parties drawn from the mega-caste category of 'Vanniya Kula Kshatriya'.²⁸

The DMK learnt a thing or two about electoral politics when it found Rajagopalachari returning from self-imposed exile to become Chief Minister in spite of the fact that the Congress Party had been reduced to a minority in the Assembly. One of the measures taken to strengthen support for the Congress was the recruitment of the leader of the Commonweal Party into the Cabinet. Kamaraj Nadar, who took over the Chief Ministership from Rajagopalachari, went one better by recruiting the leader of the Tamil Nad Toilers Party into the Cabinet. By such methods the Congress was able to raise the strength of its bloc in the legislature to 142 in a (reorganised) house of 231.²⁹

In a situation where the centre of political gravity had shifted from Brahmins and forward non-Brahmins to the numerically strong backward castes, winning the support of these caste-based parties was a double victory for the ruling party. It gave the Government 'stability' and it provided an opening into the powerful backward caste bloc. For the DMK, the 'Vanniya Kula Kshatriya Doublecross' showed how easy it was to forget election pledges. It provided an emotional climate which actively promoted the DMK's entry into electoral politics. A feeling of being unjustly treated by the Government was encouraged by court cases launched against DMK leaders and party publications; it was greatly strengthened by the launching of the Three-Cornered Agitation in 1953. Such a feeling positively influenced the rank-and-file towards direct participation in electoral politics.

The 'Movement Phase'

The Three-Cornered Agitation was based on opposition to the Rajagopalachari Government's scheme of 'caste-based education'; on the symbolic demand for changing the name of a town in Tiruchirapally from Dalmiapuram to Kallakudi; and on a protest against certain derogatory remarks Jawaharlal Nehru had made about the DMK leaders. The Congress regime replied to this agitation—which had substantial support among the people and took up certain militant forms of protest with open suppressive force.

While the DMK, supported by the DK, launched massive demonstrations against the Rajagopalachari Government's educational policy, the decisive blow to the Ministry came from within the ruling party. A strong factional opposition grew up against Rajagopalachari and compelled him to resign in 1954. Kamaraj, encouraged by the advice of E V Ramasami, became Chief Minister. The DK supported the 'Kamaraj

Congress' during the entire period of Kamaraj's Chief Ministership, from 1954 to 1963.

The DMK, meanwhile, continued to build up solid mass support. It made a pointed and forceful appeal to non-Brahmin intellectuals. It attracted a number of Tamil scholars and its leaders excelled in Tamil oratory. The party's emphasis on scholarly Tamil studies helped renew interest in Tamil literature and linguistics. The combination of political and literary activities was a distinct aid to the DMK in building up a wider basis of intellectual and popular support. The numerous periodical publications started by party leaders had a growing influence. Despite Congress political hegemony, political propaganda in Tamil Nadu came to be heavily influenced by the DMK. Radio talks, plays and films were used by the party tellingly. The DMK-influenced films dealt, in an intensive, creative and highly effective way, with the plight of the poor, with people living in the streets, with starvation, with political corruption. They linked these to the clear political message of the ineptitude of the Congress regime. At a time when cinema houses were just being extended to rural Tamil Nadu, the DMK's propaganda had a new and far-reaching appeal. DMK ideas reached every area of life in Tamil Nadu through films, books, pamphlets, speeches, dramas, songs and newspapers. During this 'movement phase', the ideology of the party was widely spread and began to take hold, as large numbers of people restructured their conceptions of political and social reality.

This picture of the early phase of the DMK's development—the phase of finding moorings in Tamil Nadu politics—is useful, but the limitations and shortcomings of Barnett's data and understanding must also be noted. In the first place, there is no critical examination of the ideology and programme of the party during this 'radical period'.⁸⁰ Secondly, the empirical value of the author's research would have been appreciably enhanced had she chosen to give us a more concrete and live picture of the party's work among the masses during this period, by means of illustrative material and case-studies. An analysis of a sample of the party's books, pamphlets, speeches, plays, songs, newspapers and films would have been far more enlightening than the general statements she makes. Thirdly, the generalisation that the centre of political gravity had shifted from Brahmins and forward non-Brahmins to the numerically strong backward castes presents a partial, and distorted picture of the reality-as the reality itself. An important aspect of the DMK's early development was certainly rooted among the real stirrings of the masses of the people belonging to backward castes against their caste subjection, but the reality is by no means exhausted by such a statement. The researcher would have done much better had she sought the explanation for the DMK's success in 'mass mobilisation' in the inter-relationship of the social, economic and political spheres.

Barnett does not even seem to be aware that the DMK came

alive in a period when a ferocious offensive was being waged by the Congress regime against the working class and democratic movement and when communists were in prison or underground or being shot. She makes no reference to the fact that between 1949 and 1951—in the midst of the ruling class terror against the communists and the democratic masses—prominent DMK leaders campaigned in a small way against the Congress regime's atrocities and repression and played a democratic role in their own way.⁸¹ Barnett does not show the slightest awareness of the fact that the DMK developed as a political force with an expanding mass support precisely in a period when the revisionist trend was developing and consolidating itself within the Communist Party and the working class movement. Enamoured of Nehru's 'progressive' policies, this trend failed in line and practice to mobilise the masses in a revolutionary way against the ruling classes.⁸² On the other hand, the crisis in the economy and problems of the people such as unemployment and the rise in food prices found a reflex in the DMK's rhetoric and to a lesser extent in its campaigns through the fifties. The DMK's ideological-political line, programme and practice were hazy, unscientific and contradictory even during the 'radical period'; a detailed scientific examination is likely to identify weaknesses and nascent contradictions that became prominent and asserted themselves during the party's later development. But there can be no doubt that the party's limited bourgeois-democratic opposition to the social, national, economic and political policies of the Congress regime developed on extremely favourable terrain and soil.

Development as a Political Force

Barnett's story of the development of the DMK as a full-fledged party in opposition and in power is a mixture of some worthwhile and even revealing empirical data with the superficial, the distorted and the trivial. She has devoted a great deal of empirical attention and industry to two aspects of the party's development: its rapidly improving performance in the 1962, 1967 and 1971 Assembly elections, and the background characteristics and perceptions of its leadership at the State and local levels. The detailed original analysis of electoral performance in Tamil Nadu which, for some reason, is not extended to the sphere of parliamentary elections, reveals the spatial distribution, the extent, the depth and the pattern of the DMK's development as an organised electoral force.

The 1962 election resulted in a firm Congress majority in the Assembly, but the most significant result was the failure of the 'Kamaraj Congress' to halt, much less destroy, the DMK. The DMK, polling no less than 27 percent of the valid votes, improved its position to 50 seats compared with 15 seats in 1957. In spite of Congress gains such as the defeat of Annadurai in Kancheepuram, the 1962 Assembly elections left the ruling party shaken and concerned about the DMK's future.

The 1967 elections swept the DMK into power in the state. The party's own development and its skilful tactics of electoral adjustment enabled it to inflict a humiliating defeat on the Congress. Polling 40.6 percent of the valid votes, the DMK captured 138 seats in the Assembly against the Congress's 47. The entire Congress Cabinet was routed, the greatest humiliation being the defeat of Kamaraj Nadar by a 28-year old DMK student leader.

Spatial Spread and Mobilising Capacity

The rise of the DMK transformed the Tamil Nadu electoral system from a state of one-party dominance to a viable two-party system. Barnett's detailed analysis of electoral trends in the State between 1957 and 1971 impressively reveals certain aspects of the DMK's impact on electoral politics. In the first place, it clearly brings out the regional variation in electoral performance. Historically, both the Congress and the Dravidian Movement had been better organised in the cities and towns than in the countryside and in the north-eastern plains than in the western and southern mountainous areas of Tamil Nadu. The Congress had in the 1930s and 1940s spread itself throughout Tamil Nadu. It had a distinct advantage over the Dravidian Movement in the districts of Coimbatore and Tirunelveli and in parts of Madurai District. It was strong in the districts of Chingleput, Salem and Tiruchirapally where the Dravidian Movement was active and well supported. The Movement organisations concentrated their activities in the districts of Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot and in eastern Salem, northern Tiruchirapally and parts of Thanjavur. Thus, the fields of initial political contention between the Congress and the DMK were unevenly distributed in terms of intensity of contention and in terms of organisation.

Barnett's map of the spatial spread of the DMK's victories in 1967 and 1971 vividly represents the rapid development of the DMK as a State-wide political force. The broad base of the DMK's support which was evident in 1967 was expanded by 1971. The extreme southern and western districts had relatively significant Assembly constituencies not won by the DMK either in 1967 or in 1971. Certain relatively weak electoral links were evident even after 1971: a part of Madras city, a part of south-western North Arcot, the western portion of Dharmapuri, the western part of Salem, certain western and central parts of Coimbatore, the southern part of Madurai, a substantial part of Tirunelveli, the bulk of Kanyakumari, the central and south-western part of Ramanathapuram, a small part of Tiruchirapally and a not inconsiderable part of Thanjavur. What is remarkable is the breadth of the DMK's electoral support and the consolidation of this support throughout the state. It is clear that if the DMK's political influence had penetrated the entire State by 1967, the party had commanding electoral support from one end of the State to the other by 1971.

Secondly, Barnett's analysis clearly brings out the scope, the intensity and the efficiency of the DMK's electoral mobilisation. Between 1957 and 1971 the party revealed a brilliant potential for mobilising new and hitherto untapped support. Although no systematic analysis is attempted by the author to discover the DMK's relative hold among different classes and castes in the population, the overall data does suggest a surging mobilisation of the masses of the urban and rural poor, and particularly of the masses of the toiling people belonging to backward castes.

Principal Trends and Magnitudes

Barnett points to two types of evidence of a substantial 'slack' in the electoral system, which the DMK was able to take advantage of between 1957 and 1971: (a) a low voter turn-out in 1957 (49.3 percent) and (b) a substantial mobilisation of support by independent candidates in 1957 (24.7 percent of the total valid vote and over 10 percent of the total number of seats). The 1957 elections revealed to the DMK leadership a vast reservoir of unmobilised votes and also the depth of unorganised, but clearly non-Congress support. The sharp increase of voter participation after 1957, the sharp decline in the votes secured and in the seats won by independents, and the steady decline of Congress support in the State all provide measures of the success of the DMK's electoral strategy. Some relevant co-relations involved in this success are clear from the following table presented by the author:

TABLE SHOWING ELECTORAL CHANGES IN THE TAMIL NADU ASSEMBLY ELECTION, 1957-1971.

Year	Total Voter Turnout (%)	Independents % Vote	No. of Seats	Congress % Vote	No. of Seats	DMK % Vote	No. of Seats	Total No. of Seats
1957	49.3	24.7	22	45.3	151	12.8	13	205
1962	70.6	8.2	5	46.1	139	27.1	50	206
1967	76.6	5.1	4	41.4	50	40.6	138	234
1971	71.8	6.6	10	35.0	17	48.6	184	234

NOTE: Figures for independents do not include DMK candidates running as independents in 1957. Figures for Congress in 1971 refer to the Congress (O).

A more detailed quantitative examination of the election results suggests distinct trends in the DMK's spread and mobilisation of support. The way in which the DMK made inroads into Congress support in the period 1957-1971 reveals a clear trend. In 1967, when the DMK first contested a constituency, each percent of vote it received was associated with a 0.53 percent decline in the Congress vote; in constituencies contested twice, each percent of increase in the DMK's vote was associated with a 0.21 percent decline in the Congress vote; in constituencies contested thrice, each percent was associated with 0.24 percent.

In 1971, when the DMK initially contested a constituency, each percent it received was associated with a 0.41 percent decline in the Congress vote; when a constituency was contested twice, each percent increase was associated with 0.03 percent; when a constituency was contested thrice, each percent with 0.33 percent; and when a constituency was contested four times, each percent with 0.52 percent.

Seen from the Congress end, there was a sustained trend of decline in support in the face of the DMK's challenge. The general pattern was that the DMK cut sharply into the Congress vote on first entering a constituency, then was less effective, but gradually increased its impact as it continued to contest the constituency. Between 1957 and 1971 the DMK increased its base of support emphatically at the expense of the Congress.

Another clear trend emerges from a detailed examination of the impact of the DMK's entry and presence on the mobilisation of new voters. In 1967, when the DMK first contested a constituency, the impact on voter turn-out was a 0.89 percent increase over the turn-out in constituencies which the DMK had never contested; when a constituency was contested twice the impact was 1.99 percent; when a constituency was contested thrice, it was 3.05 percent. In 1971, when the DMK first contested a constituency, the impact on voter turn-out was 6.10 percent; when a constituency was contested twice, the impact was 5.87 percent; when a constituency was contested thrice, it was 5.48 percent; and when a constituency was contested four times, it was 8.08 percent. In 1967, the impact on voter turn-out was significant only when the party contested thrice. In 1971, the impact was significant for all categories of DMK presence, with the highest impact coming in the constituencies contested four times. In general, the impact of the DMK's presence on voter turn-out in a constituency increased impressively through sustained contest. This finding substantiates the hypothesis that *the DMK succeeded in reaching past the Congress and other parties* and in mobilising a vast reservoir of mass support hitherto neglected.

A further trend that emerges is the *evenness of the DMK's electoral performance between the urban and the rural areas*. To those who (going by the easily observed fact that the initial DMK successes came in urban areas⁸⁸) imagine that the DMK's hold has been predominantly urban, it might come as a surprise that the urban-rural distinction has no real or lasting impact on the pattern of the DMK-Congress contention in elections. In fact, substantial inroads were made by the DMK into rural Tamil Nadu beginning in 1962. Barnett's detailed analysis of the 1971 election results shows that the urban voter turn-out tended to be higher in constituencies where the DMK's presence was directly felt than in constituencies where the DMK did not contest. Nevertheless, the correlation between the DMK's direct presence and voter turn-out in urban constituencies was no different from the general statewide co-relation

which revealed the powerful mobilisation of support by the DMK. It is clear, then, the DMK's electoral support in the period 1957-1971 was formidable in rural as well as in urban areas.

The Party Leadership

Barnett's study of the socio-economic characteristics of the DMK's State and local-level leadership (as of 1968) claims to clarify the process of the rapid development of the party and to provide perspectives on the party in power. The claim proves to be exaggerated and pretentious, since the method of research based on interviews, archival, journalistic and other written material and on a questionnaire circulated to DMK and Congress leaders in 1965,⁸⁵ is reduced to eliciting descriptive details and verbal responses without any attempt to look at a deeper level or to check up on the information obtained.

The verbal responses elicited from State and local-level leaders of the DMK and from State leaders of the Congress are neither significant nor reliable. The analysis is supposed to reveal the ideological and world-view make-up of the DMK leadership, as well as its perception of social, economic and political questions. Actually, the author comes up with the result that the DMK State and local-level leaders *professed* more secular and non-religious perspectives than the State leaders of the Congress; that the State leaders of the DMK and the Congress *professed* an equal concern with agrarian issues; and that the DMK State leaders *professed* a greater concern with language and Tamil nationalist issues than Congress State leaders. But how exactly do such *professions* of world-view, ideology and opinion on social, economic and political questions measure up against *practice*, against the real policies and activities of the party?

Barnett has not worked out for herself any method of demarcating verbal responses from real behaviour, demagoguery from life, profession from practice. Descriptive detail on the DMK leadership is as much an indicator of the class character of the party as descriptive detail on the mass basis of the party would be. The primary question here is not what class or caste the leaders of the party originate from or what world-view, ideology or opinion they profess; nor is it what class or caste the members, supporters and sympathisers of the party are drawn from. The primary question is the *real class interest* behind the words, the professions, the slogans and the programme of the party. The scientific method of identifying this class interest is a detailed, all-sided investigation of the impact of the ideology, the slogans, the policies and the activities of the party on different classes and different sections of the population. The problem before the political scientist, then, is to develop a method of finding out what classes or sections are served by the party. Barnett is unable even to formulate the problem in these terms.

The Party's Mass Base

Barnett's research on the mass base of the DMK does not take us very far. The assertion that the DMK won increasing support from the backward castes is not really a contribution to our knowledge of the political development of Tamil Nadu, in the absence of any concrete data. The assertion that the DMK won impressive support in urban areas does not tell us what sections of the workers, the middle classes and the bourgeoisie supported the party. The assertion that the mass basis of the DMK was found as much in rural as in urban areas is superficial insofar as it does not identify the specific agrarian and rural classes or the sections among them which rallied behind the party.

The paradigm for this area of research is Robert Lane's philistine method of determining the ideological-political substance of the American 'common man'.⁸⁶ Barnett's 'common man' of Tamil Nadu, found to be the key link in the DMK's lengthening chain of mass support, takes shape in the course of a random-sample survey of 200 heads of households in a neighbourhood in Madras City. The field of survey cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be considered representative of Tamil Nadu and the author does not explain why her survey did not attempt to cover major cross-sections of the rural and urban population. But what is surprising is that even the results of this unrepresentative survey are not presented by Barnett. Instead, her 'common man' is metamorphosed in five sketchy case-studies from the neighbourhood: 'Chinnasami Naicker', a pro-DMK labourer, 'B R Natarajan Periyasami', an upper-class Congressman, 'C V Siva Dorai', a poor Harijan Congressman, 'D A Munusami', a poor Harijan DMK supporter, and 'E R Venkataswami Aiyer', a middle-class Brahmin Congressman.

These five case-studies are used to 'substantiate' the profound thesis that high 'political efficacy' (that is, the feeling that the respondent matters in politics) was found typical of all but the Harijan respondents; that the 'common man' in Tamil Nadu was swayed by charisma and heartily endorsed strong and even heavy-handed political leadership and that the 'cultural nationalist' component of Dravidian ideology (in contrast to its radical social reform component) cut across caste and class lines and was internalised in Tamil society. In fact, Barnett's story of where and how the DMK won its following among the masses of the Tamil people, while telling us nothing that we did not already know only contributes distortions, superficiality and triviality to the subject.

THE RECORD OF THE DMK IN POWER

Nine years certainly provide an adequate period for assessing the character of a party in power, for discovering its links and mediations in the political process, for grasping the direction and essential content of its self-movement or development.

Between 1967 and February 1976 the impact of the ideology, the

slogans, the policies and the practice of the DMK as a ruling party was profoundly experienced by the people of Tamil Nadu. During this period a bourgeois party which started with an enormous reservoir of mass support and goodwill had, by its practice alienated itself from the workers and the toiling and democratic people of Tamil Nadu. It had made a clear cut ideological and class choice in favour of the path of development adopted by the bourgeois-landlord class combine led by the big bourgeoisie. It had been laid low by the weight of its internal contradictions. It had split into two, with the overwhelming bulk of its membership and support—anything upto three-fourths of the old strength—rallying round the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK)⁸⁷ led by the film actor, M G Ramachandran. The official DMK led by Karunanidhi, discredited by its anti-democratic policies among the wide masses of Tamil people, suffering the stigma of corruption, a shadow of its former self, attempted to regain its old position among the people by a not entirely consistent policy of opposition to the anti-people Emergency.

On the 'Contradictions' of Cultural Nationalism

It would be too much to expect Barnett to generalise and sum up this vast and complex experience scientifically, although she does pretentiously draw lessons relating to the 'contradictions' of cultural nationalism in power. Barnett's concept of contradiction turns out to be a device to account for what she cannot explain scientifically. It is a mixed up way of saying that the DMK could not really fulfil its various campaign promises, it could not avoid division into factions, it could not cope with economic fragmentation and conflicting class interests, it could not avert mounting frustration and discontent, it could not prevent disintegration.

The question, of course, is *why* and Barnett sets about answering this with extreme philistine superficiality. Her research on the "Contradictions of Cultural Nationalism in the Annadurai Era" relies heavily on sketchy newspaper accounts and election gossip. It deals with the 'politics of language', with problems relating to students and transport workers, with fiscal policy, with labour policy, with the textile crisis, with the kisan struggle in East Thanjavur, with Harijan Welfare and social reform policy, with the DMK's attitude to religion without making any basic sense of all this experience. It fails to single out any of these areas for serious, concrete examination. Instead, it reproduces distortions and makes glib, trivial judgements on almost all these areas. For example, the standpoint of the managements on the crisis of the textile industry is uncritically reported without any serious examination of the standpoint and specific demands of the organised workers. Nor is there any attempt to grasp the real economic and class issues involved in the struggles of the formidable force of the textile workers. The DMK's labour policy is vaguely characterised as "not especially pro-labour,"

without any examination of specific disputes, or of the party's inglorious record of trade union organisation and experience. The class struggle that developed sharply in East Thanjavur in 1968 and the burning alive of 44 Harijan agricultural labouring folk, mostly women and children, by landlords in Kilvenmani on December 25, 1968 are treated in an extremely offhand way, without an understanding of the real issues involved, without any attempt to separate the just from the unjust, without any identification of the class criminals. Barnett's account of 'Tanjore Labour-Mirasdar Disputes' finds DMK policy confused and timid, "ideologically incapable of dealing with the economic contradictions of the Tanjore situation." It fails to see that this 'confusion' and 'timidity' far from being a passively contemplative attitude to the class situation, developed soon enough into a distinctly pro-landlord and reactionary policy that resorted to several specific suppressive measures against the agricultural labourers organised under the red banner of the All-India Kisan Sabha. The quality of Barnett's understanding of the agrarian situation in East Thanjavur is expressed in the false and absurd paradox "many Untouchables turned to the Communist Party which, paradoxically was primarily led by Brahmins"; and in silly assertions such as, "within Tamil Nadu, there is much sympathy for the mirasdar" or that the Communist-led kisan movement in East Thanjavur "seemed an attack on the most sacred symbols in a predominantly peasant society—land ownership."

The Assessment of the 'Karunanidhi Era'

Barnett's research on the "Contradictions of Cultural Nationalism in the Karunanidhi Era" is a shoddy, fourth-rate summary of superficial newspaper accounts and half-truths and misconceptions centreing on the theme of growing factionalism within the party. This account narrating a story of factionalism without identifying the grounds, the tap-roots and the issues of factional strife, presents a small part of the reality as the reality itself. It describes the DMK's alliance with the Ruling Congress without seeing any connection with the previous political line and practice of the DMK. It reproduces journalistic and filmland gossip about events leading to the split in the DMK in late 1972. It exaggerates the significance of the break of the Satyavani Muthu group from the DMK by presenting the question as a general alienation of the party from the masses of Scheduled Castes. It does not even seem to be aware that major working class struggles took place in the State during the 'Karunanidhi Era' such as the united struggles of the textile workers of Coimbatore and Madurai, the struggles of sugar factory workers, the prolonged struggle of the workers of the Standard Motors factory near Madras in late 1969 and early 1970, the bitter struggle of the workers of the Neyveli Lignite Corporation in May 1970, the 97-day strike of the workers of the Madras Rubber Factory in 1971, the heroic

struggle of the workers of the Simpson group of companies, concentrated in Madras, in late 1971 and in 1972 and 1973, and repeated action by the employees of the State Electricity Board. It provides a partial rationalisation of the DMK leadership's corruption by treating it as a corruption which is likely to be politically motivated and expended.

Barnett mysteriously perceives M G Ramachandran's party as the representative of "the older notion of Dravidian nationalism"⁸⁶ in contrast to Karunanidhi's party as the representative of "Tamil nationalism." She deals with the DMK leadership's stand on State autonomy without attempting to understand the roots of the crisis of Centre-State relations in India, or the specific problem in Tamil Nadu, or the content of the DMK's demand for State autonomy.

The real political, economic and social issues involved in the record of DMK misrule in the 'Karananidhi Era' are either poorly grasped or obscured. There is no serious examination of the DMK's *industrial policy*, which was clearly oriented towards the interests of the big capitalists; of its *attitude to investment by foreign finance capital*, which appeared indistinguishable from the open-door attitude of the Swatantra Party; of its *labour policy*, which was clearly aimed at suppressing and disrupting the organised working class; of its *police policy*, which was employed in many specific instances in the interests of capitalists and landlords against workers and the rural poor; of its *procurement and food policy* which was clearly oriented to serve the interests of the landlords and hoarders; of its *political stand* of collaborating with the Central Government and, at least for a while, with the Ruling Congress Party; of the changes in its *ideology and programme* in response to a changing situation and on the basis of its own experience in power.

The specific crisis of agriculture and industry in the State; the acute power shortage; the run away inflation and unemployment; the deepening and widening mass poverty; the sharply intensified resources crisis in the State—these are areas which Barnett does not even seem aware of when she examines the record of the DMK in opposition and in power.

The quality of her understanding of such matters is revealed in the casual assertion that the DMK sought to consolidate its position in Tamil Nadu politics by "linking itself to the left-leaning economic and social policies of Indira Gandhi". But how does one characterise an understanding which judges the Congress defeat in Tamil Nadu in 1967 as largely undeserved, as a floundering on an upsurge of material and economic improvement for 'society' and on a 'revolution of rising expectations'?

It is ironic that growth and penetration of support for the DMK occurred in one of the best-administered states of India. Tamil Nadu was one of the five states that showed rates of growth higher than the all-India average (4.17 percent versus 3.01 percent for

all states). In agricultural productivity and education the state had a particularly good record. In addition, there had been extensive irrigation, installation of village electric power, and a large-scale road building programme. In fact, the picture is generally one of substantial and visible economic development in Tamil Nadu since the First Five Year Plan was inaugurated in 1952. While Congress policies were beneficial to the state as a whole, they benefitted some segments of the population more than others, thus becoming a source of discontent. Many whose lives were objectively improved because of Congress policies became critical of the Congress government because their horizons and expectations had been expanded and their political and social consciousness raised.⁸⁹

Schematic Theory and Superficial Empiricism

Here then is a researcher who lacks the standpoint, the method, the discipline, the modesty to keep her larger conclusions reasonably in line with the empirical component of her research. At the end of an extended, 368-page study, she seems as ignorant of the main direction and essential trends of the contemporary historical process she is concerned with, as she was before she embarked on her research. Unable to grasp the relationship between the general and the particular in her field of research, she presents isolated empirical statements which fail to approach political thinking and political development concretely from the angle of the overall laws of the historical process. Ignorant of scientific theoretical principles of political science—the social conditionedness of political thinking and political development, their dialectical nature, their links with historical actions and practice⁹⁰—she is not even aware that what is defensible and worthwhile in her research is an empiricism which, in the final analysis, fails to penetrate the appearances and grasp the essence of social development in Tamil Nadu in the twentieth century.

Unable to make a concrete analysis of a concrete situation, she falls victim to abstract theory that is designed primarily to cover up the fact that “politics is ultimately determined by the deep-lying needs of social development as expressed in the interests of large groups of the population, classes and social strata”.⁹¹ Caught up in a weak cross-fire between abstract, schematic theory and superficial, distorted and trivial journalistic perception, she misses fire on the objective and subjective conditions involved in the origin, rise and development of the DMK. Barnett’s failure to grasp the essence of the national question and of political development in Tamil Nadu reflects the weaknesses, the inconsistencies, and the crisis of Western bourgeois political science. The only thing that can be said in her favour is that she seems honestly unaware of what is reactionary in this political science, of the rift between empiricism and abstract theoretical dogmatism in her work. There is still time and

opportunity in the field to unlearn the theoretical and philistine rubbish she is burdened with and to begin to make a concrete analysis of the concrete situation from the angle of the overall laws of the contemporary historical process, or real social relations and the deep-lying needs of social development, of the fundamental trends of socially conditioned and mediated political development.

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- ¹ The eclectic theoretical mixture consists chiefly of the ideas of Hans Kohn on 'nationalism', Leonard Binder on 'political identity'; Samuel Stouffer and T. Gurr on 'relative deprivation'; Stephen Alan Barnett on the transformation from 'caste to ethnicity' constituting a structural change in society; Louis Dumont on the 'Brahmanic' and 'Kingly' models; and Robert Lane on 'political ideology and the paradigm of the 'common man'.
- ² See Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1976, p. 8.
- ³ The slogan and programme of 'cultural national autonomy' was adopted by the Austrian Social Democratic Party at the Brunn Congress in 1899 and its principal theoretician was Otto Bauer. The slogan was raised by bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalism sporadically in Europe. It was attacked as reactionary and as contrary to the whole course of the historical development of nationalities by Lenin and Stalin. See Lenin's remarks on 'Cultural National Autonomy' in "Critical Remarks on the National Question" in the collection, *Questions of National Policy and Proletarian Internationalism*, Progress Publishers, Moscow. See also Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, New Book Centre, Calcutta, 1971. It must be noted that 'cultural national autonomy' or 'cultural nationalism' divorces nationhood from territory, denies the right of a nationality to self-determination, and endows the nationality with merely 'cultural' rights. There is no evidence whatsoever that the slogans of 'Dravida Nadu' and, later, a separate Tamil Nadu had anything to do with 'cultural nationalism' in its historical sense.
- ⁴ Hans Kohn, *The Age of Nationalism*, Harper and Row, New York, 1962.
- ⁵ The author's division is as follows: Part I, Origins of Tamil Nationalism; Part II, The Politics of Emergent Nationalism; Part III, Elites, Masses and Cultural Nationalism; and Part IV, Cultural Nationalism and Public Policy.
- ⁶ See Eugene Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969.
- ⁷ Borrowed without any discussion from Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: An Essay on the Caste System*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970.
- ⁸ Irschick cited above, pp. 10-19.
- ⁹ The reference by the author is to Kathleen Gough's study of "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village" in McKim Marriott (ed), *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955.
- ¹⁰ See unpublished Ph.D. thesis by V. Krishnan, *Indigenous Banking in South India*, Madras University, 1935, available at the Madras University Library. Krishnan mentions that the Indo-Commercial Bank Limited, a public limited company with a paid-up capital of Rs 10 lakhs, was organised by a Kallidaikuruchi Brahmin, S. N. S. Sankaralingam Iyer; and estimates the total working capital of 175 Kallidaikuruchi Brahmin firms working in the districts of Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madurai and Tiruchirappalli and in the Indian State of Travancore-Cochin at Rs 50.5 million at the time of the writing of his thesis.
- ¹¹ My own research on the rise and development of the cotton textile factory industry in the Madras Presidency between 1870 and 1934 suggests that Kallidaikur-

uchi Brahmin bankers and money lenders held a position of some importance as share-holders of the mill companies. An analysis of the share-holding in the Madura Mills group over the period 1890-1923 revealed that the proportion of the Indian shareholding held by Kallidaikuruchi Brahmin bankers and money lenders varied between 2.90 percent and 4.38 percent. This contrasted with the sharply fluctuating position of Nattukottai Chettiar bankers and moneylenders, whose proportion of the Indian shareholding rose from 3.06 percent in 1892 to 34.53 percent in 1908 and, after 1913, declined continuously until it reached 0.22 percent in 1923.

- ¹² For a discussion of the significance of caste and caste organisation in South India during the period 1800-1925 and the British statistical practices relating to this, see C J Baker and D A Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change 1880-1940*, Macmillan (India), Delhi, 1974, especially pp 150-231. Washbrook's attack on naive, mega-caste based models and interpretations of South Indian society impressively and quickly demolishes the abstract theoretical foundation on which Barnett builds up her case. Mega-labels like 'Non-Brahmin', even 'Vanniya Kula Kshatriya' did not represent the essence of social reality, although they were certainly derived from this complex social reality. These labels were adopted for specific purposes which can be understood in the context of larger economic, social and political conditions.

Washbrook and Baker criticise some of the superficialities and untested assumption, perpetrated in existing studies of South Indian society and political developments but their own standpoint is basically pro-imperialist and anti-national. The distinguishing characteristic of this brand of political science research is the obscuring of the connection between the complex political development of the period and the principal contradiction—the contradiction between British imperialism and the masses of the people of India.

- ¹³ R P Dutt, *India Today*, People's Publishing House, Delhi.

¹⁴ Ibid, p 306.

¹⁵ Ibid, p 306.

- ¹⁶ For a critical discussion of this question, see Arulalan's article, "The Relevance of Periyar; Caste or Class Struggle?" in *Radical Review*, Madras, May 1971.

¹⁷ In personal terms and in terms of social significance, the tragedy of Periyar is comparable to the larger tragedy of the outstanding bourgeois national leader and patriot, Subhas Chandra Bose, who towards the end of his political career drifted into shameful collaboration with Japanese fascism. In both cases, the inability of bourgeois nationalism and the outstanding individual to respond in a consistently democratic way to key historical developments stands out in bold relief.

- ¹⁸ See VI Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," cited above, pp 19-20.

¹⁹ See V V Balabushevich and A M Dyakov, (ed.), *A Contemporary History of India*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1964, pp 320-328.

- ²⁰ Ibid, p 321. For more details, see N C Bhogendranath, *Development of the Textile Industry in Madras (Upto 1950)*, University of Madras, 1957, pp 236-253.

²¹ Balabushevich and Dyakov (ed.), cited above, p 326.

- ²² See Prakash Karat, "The Peasant Movement in Malabar, 1934-1940," in *Social Scientist* 50, publication of the Indian School of Social Sciences, Trivandrum.

²³ Balabushevich and Dyakov, (ed.), cited above, pp 389-392.

²⁴ Ibid, p 370.

²⁵ Ibid, pp 391-392.

- ²⁶ Communist and Kisan Sabha efforts to organise the agricultural labourers of East Thanjavur began seriously soon after the First Congress of the CPI held at Bombay in May 1943. The decision to concentrate in this vanguard agrarian area in Tamil Nadu was followed up in a concrete way after the meeting of the Central Kisan Council at Bombay in August 1934.

- 27 The figures are as follows: Brahmins, 19.5 percent of those detained; Forward Non-Brahmins, 33.9 percent; Backward Non-Brahmins, 4.9 percent; service castes, 0.5 percent; Non-Hindu religious sects, 3.4 percent; major North Indian castes, 1.8 percent; untouchables 0.4 percent; other castes, 6.5 percent; unspecified, 29.1. per cent.
- 28 According to Barnett, the 'Vanniya Kula Kshatriya' coalition consists of Naickers Padayachis and Vanniya castes.
- 29 The reorganisation was a consequence of the formation of the State of Andhra Pradesh on October 1, 1953.
- 30 For a preliminary critical article taking up this subject, see Mythily Shivaraman, "The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam: The Content of its Ideology" in *Radical Review*, January 1970.
- 31 Ibid, p 5.
- 32 This point is made by Mythily Shivaraman, cited above, p 5.
- 33 The first decisive electoral success of the DMK came in 1959, when it captured the Madras Corporation with the support of the Communist Party.
- 34 In 1957, the DMK had no alliance with the Communist Party or the Praja Socialist Party, but had an understanding with a dissident and much overrated group that had left the Congress Party, the Congress Reform Committee. In 1962, the DMK had a highly limited adjustment of seats with the CPI, with the Forward Bloc and the Muslim League, and a wider tacit understanding with the newly formed Swatantra Party. In 1967, the DMK had constituency-wide adjustments with the Swatantra Party, the Muslim League, the Praja Socialist Party, the Samyuktha Socialist Party and the Communist Party of India (Marxist). In 1971, the DMK dominated an alliance with the Ruling Congress, the Right Communist Party, the Praja Socialist Party, the Muslim League and the Forward Bloc. It must be emphasised that the first real *programmatic alliance* entered into by the DMK was in 1971.
- 35 The author's study of leaders covered 459 local level leaders of the DMK, 38 out of the 100 members of the General Council, and 120 out of the 353 members of the TNCC.
- 36 Robert E Lane, *Political Ideology : Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does*, Free Press, New York, 1962.
- 37 The Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK), formed in October 1972, was renamed the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in September 1976 amidst fears experienced by the party leadership that the ADMK might attract the 'anti-nation' ban proposed by the Indira Gandhi regime. In October 1976, a small group led by Kovai Chezhian broke away from the AIADMK; this group, which called itself the ADMK, supported the Janatha-DMK-CPI (M) camp in the parliamentary elections in March 1977, but its strength appeared to be insignificant.
- 38 What 'Dravidian nationalism' has to do with a bourgeois party which has so far taken a strikingly inconsistent and opportunistic position on key political, economic and social questions, repudiated the undivided DMK's stand on State autonomy, and entered into a reactionary alliance with the Ruling Congress, only Barnett can explain. The fact that M G Ramachandran, the leader of the AIADMK, and K Manoharan, the second ranking leader of that party, are of Malayalee origin and the sporadic anti-Malayalee campaign conducted by the DMK leadership appear somehow to have influenced the author towards this characterisation (See pp 303-304).
- 39 Barnett, op. cit., p 153.
- 40 Yuri Krasin, "Political Thinking: Methodological Aspects" in *Social Sciences*, quarterly journal of the section of Social Sciences of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow, No 1, 1977, p 51.
- 41 Ibid., p 54.

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Politics of a Literary Style □ Trans-
portation Development in Kerala □
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standing the Non-Brahman Movement

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Articles, report, communication and review article express the views of the authors and not necessarily of the editors or of the Indian School of Social Sciences.

CONTRIBUTORS

NIRMALA BANERJEE is a Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

P IBRAHIM is a lecturer at the Department of Economics, University of Kerala

SATISH MISHRA is a research scholar at the Cambridge University

B T RANADIVE is President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions and a Member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

DAVID SELBOURNE teaches at Ruskin College, Oxford

KARTHIGESU SIVATHAMBY is Associate Professor of Tamil at the University of Sri Lanka

EDITOR'S NOTE

The article "Imperialism and Science" by Anis Alam (*Social Scientist* Volume 6 Number 5 December 1977) appeared in the Winter 1978 issue of *Race and Class*. We are grateful to the editors of that journal, who had commissioned the article, for allowing us to use it.

The co-author of the article "Land Reforms in West Bengal" (*Social Scientist* Volume 6 Number 6/7 January/February 1978) is Ratan Ghosh and not Ranjan Ghosh as indicated in the contents. The error is regretted.

NIRMALA BANERJEE

Women Workers and Development

THIS PAPER is concerned with some aspects of the role of women workers in India's development since Independence. Although one sees an increasing number of women nowadays working in diverse fields and in positions of importance, official statistics indicate that the two decades of development have not been very kind to women workers in general. The percentage of women in the work force has declined. In the organised sector, while the number of women employees in the public sector has more than doubled during the 60's, their number in the private sector has not increased particularly significantly. In the factory sector it actually declined between 1964 and 1971. In the unorganised sector also, women are being forced to work at consistently lower wage rates in jobs which do not provide a living and there are significantly more women working as unpaid family workers than men.¹

Although the general conclusion from these facts would be that the contribution of women to India's economic growth is a shrinking one, I want to argue that the peculiar character of women's economic activities has had a crucial effect on the process of development. Hitherto it has worked as a check to the disruptive and polarising effects of development as it has taken place in India. There are, however, indications that, in future, the effects of the nature of women's work as

it is evolving, may not be as benign. It may henceforth become a destabilising force and further reinforce the vicious tendency of increasing the gap between the rich and the poor which is characteristic of the development experience of all third world non-socialist countries and especially India. Although systematic data to test these misgivings is non-existent, there are some developments in the manufacturing sector which support our prognosis.

The Record

While this is not the place to discuss the character of India's economic development, a brief reference to it is relevant for our argument. The most important influence on India's economic growth during this period has been the national plans which assign a major role to the public sector but, at the same time, accept the principle of private ownership and control of a large part of the productive resources. In this planned development process, the priorities adopted for public sector investment have been such as to require highly capital-intensive techniques. The products on which the public sector has concentrated are those like steel, power, cement and heavy engineering. Further, the choice of capital intensive techniques for such production has been facilitated by the fact that the cost of capital to the government is substantially lower than to the private investor.

For the large investors in the private sector again, the cost of investible funds is substantially lower than the rate which prevails in the hundi market or that which is charged by the indigenous moneylenders. Because of the imperfections of the capital market, the high opportunity cost of credit is not reflected in the institutional credit market where only the large and well established firms have an entry. In addition, these firms are also provided with inputs which aid further mechanisation such as power or mechanised transport at subsidised rates by the public sector. On the other hand, these are the very firms which, in the past, had occasionally to concede considerable wage claims due to union pressure. These factors together have resulted in these firms consistently adopting relatively more capital-intensive techniques. The tendency has been further reinforced by the policy of encouraging private investors to produce goods of international marketability—goods which are either direct substitutes for imports or produced for exports. The firms attempting this are allowed to adopt not only the product-mix but also the technology of the countries producing similar goods.

The Results

The outcome of this pattern of development has been that: (1) Employment in the modern sector, which gives the workers some security and a living wage is not increasing as fast as the capital stock

and nowhere as fast as the increase in the supply of labour. India's population of working age increased by about 51 millions between 1961 and 1971. In the period between 1962 to 1971, only 6.4 million additional jobs were created in the organised sector² which meant that the overwhelming majority had to find a living outside the organised sector. (2) Because such gainful employment is increasing slowly, the bargaining position of the people already so employed has become considerably weaker. Their claims for wage increases even to keep up with the inflationary price rise are no longer successful.³ Even politicians have taken to advising them that they should share their good luck with other less fortunate people and not go in for "narrow economism." (3) Traditional industries like textiles which once employed a proportionately large number of workers, have now started to modernise on grounds that they have to increase their competitiveness in the world market. For this modernisation, they have received substantial public assistance. This modernisation, however, mainly consists of further mechanisation with the result that in industries like the cotton and jute textiles, employment went down in absolute numbers between 1966 and 1970.⁴

India's planned development has thus been based on the implicit assumption that a large section of the working population is superfluous. From the Second Plan onwards, when planning on these assumptions started, it has been very glibly accepted that these people will find employment in consumer goods industries which were expected to adopt labour intensive techniques, but nothing was done to ensure that demand for their products would expand sufficiently to absorb all this available labour at wages which can provide a living to the workers involved. Rather, as we saw above, a number of industries like textiles were encouraged to adopt capital intensive techniques on grounds of international marketability.

The actual people who have been left out, however, cannot just sit idle like lumps of unmined coal. They have to find a living somehow or the other. They usually do so by depressing the supply price of their labour, often to levels below subsistence. It is only in the modern sector that workers had managed to get a living wage for themselves and that too is being fast eroded over time.

An Anomaly

Obviously, a situation where some 200 million Indians are being made to work under such conditions and have no immediate prospect of any change for the better is potentially a highly explosive one. In the classical logic, it should, in the long-run lead to the operation of Malthusian checks whose indications should by now start becoming obvious. There is, however, no sign of this happening. Population experts do not find any immediate prospect of a fall in the fertility rates or rise in the death rate.⁵

What is more, there is no immediate tendency towards the conclusion foretold by Malthus: "If political discontents were blended with the cries of hunger and a revolution were to take place by the instrumentality of a mob clamouring for want of food, the consequences would be unceasing change and unceasing carnage, the bloody career of which nothing but the establishment of some complete despotism could arrest."⁶ The poor appear to be coping with their increasing misery quietly unnoticed except on ceremonial occasions by political parties of all shades. It is obvious that something in the social and economic fabric is absorbing the strain.

Working Women as a Check

It is logical to assume that when the head of the household cannot earn enough to support the family, the family will send out supplementary earners. Since amongst the truly poor, there are universal marriages but few joint families, it is logical that women would have to fulfil this function. Some acquaintance with and observation amongst the poor also seems to indicate that these women accept this responsibility automatically. Although opportunities for gainful work for women are shrinking, poor women all around are desperately trying to find some means of supporting their families. In the rural areas, knowledgeable sources claim that women's unpaid or poorly paid work, such as collecting and preparing barely edible roots and leaves for food and gathering forest products like kendu leaves and mahua seeds in vast quantities for very poor rates of return, is now becoming the main source of livelihood in the lean seasons for large sections of the population. In urban areas, one sees women of agricultural labourer families coming as commuters, or migrants—either temporary or permanent—in order to find work. In a city like Calcutta, one hardly sees a woman resident of a bustee who is not doing something or the other to supplement the family income.

Even if these facts are generally known, there has been little systematic work done on the changing economic and social role of poor women in India. We therefore undertook a study in some details of one part of this field. Though its coverage is extremely limited, it appears to offer a paradigm for the situation as a whole. Our study consisted⁷ of a sample survey of women workers in the Calcutta Corporation Area. These women all work outside what is known as the organised or modern sector consisting of the public sector, the registered factories, organised trade and commerce and the professions. We also left out construction workers and petty hawkers because of the difficulties in contacting a representative sample of them.

The experience of these women is not just typical; it exhibits the problems of Indian poor women in general in a stark exaggerated form for two reasons: a) Calcutta, with a large influx of refugees⁸ and a relatively slow growth of organised employment⁹ already has an inordinately

large section of its population dependent on the unorganised sector; b) the poor in India's large cities like Calcutta are, in one sense, the lowest level of the country's labour force. For them, there is absolutely no alternative. The poor elsewhere can, in principle, move away in search of a better living. For those who are already in a large city there is really nowhere else to go. This proposition is strengthened by the evidence that, while in the 60's, the condition of poor everywhere in India worsened, the urban poor lost relatively more: so, by the end of the decade, the poorest 10 percent of the urban population were worse off even than their rural counterparts.¹⁰

Our sample of 400 women workers typically comes from families where earners generally work in the unorganised sector or are unemployed. Of them, only 62 belonged to families where at least one worker belonged to the organised sector. While only 53 percent of the women of urban West Bengal are illiterate, about 67 percent of our sample are illiterate. Their ages range from 10 to 60 but the modal age is about 30.

Domestic service is the most common occupation amongst them with 55 percent of the interviewees working in it. The rest work as skilled or unskilled workers in manufacturing or services. Few of them have any formal training. Of them, nearly 25 percent work as piece rate workers, usually under the putting-out system. While 16 percent of them were the sole earners in their families, about 60 percent earned at least a third of the family income.

Some Findings

We have discussed elsewhere the working conditions and occupational histories of these workers in detail.¹¹ Some of the more interesting findings are summarised here briefly:

1 Over two-thirds of the interviewees work for more than 50 hours a week. Nearly half of them work for over 60 hours a week.¹²

2 Only 5 percent of the interviewed got a paid weekly leave. The rest got occasional sick leave with pay. Usually, maternity leave was without pay.

3 Although out of these 400 women, 220 have worked at their current jobs for more than 5 years, only 22 percent of them have got any increment over this period. Of these lucky few, only a third got increments which meant at least a 40 percent increase on their original earnings over these seven years.

4 There is little scope for increasing earnings by increasing skill or changing jobs. Of those who tried these methods, only twenty percent managed to increase their earnings. The easier method of increasing earnings is to take up more work. Apart from those who got increments in their long-held jobs, almost all who managed to increase their earnings have done so by increasing the amount of work they do, usually by taking up an additional piece of work.

5 For the women who have taken up additional or alternative work either of the same or of a different nature, the marginal wage rate per hour is rarely significantly higher. Indeed, it is generally below the average rate to the extent that the expected marginal wage rate in the secondary occupation is lower than that which she earned in her job.

6 In each kind of work there is no significant additional return for the age or experience in the job of the interviewee.¹³

7 In the case of domestic service, the only significant difference in hourly earnings come from the nature of the area in which the interviewee works. In other words, it is a market where wages are determined by what the customer can afford to pay.

Some Questions

The question then remains what factors can explain the amount of work that women do under such conditions? More specifically, the following questions have to be answered:

a) why some women work more hours than others at similar hourly wages;

b) why some of them have taken up more work, without the prospect of a higher hourly rate;

c) why some of them are willing to work additional hours even when the marginal hourly rate is below the average;

d) Piece rate out-workers constantly get a lower rate for the same job than the worker who does the same job in a workshop. This is true of biri making, leather and rubber cutting, garment making, electrical fittings, and so on. In some jobs like biri-making, there is a legal minimum rate which the women know of but do not get. Yet our study shows that, every year, an increasing percentage of workers are joining the work force under the putting-out system;

e) Over the seven years, there has been no significant increase in wage rates but more women are coming forward to work. Of the later entrants, an increasing percentage comes from families with no tradition of women working for monetary return.¹⁴

A Possible Answer

A simple hypothesis which would explain most of the above is that women work to make up the difference between subsistence requirements and the total earnings of the family. Given the size of the family there is an absolute minimum below which life becomes impossible. This gives the women some kind of a target real income to work for. At least amongst the kind of women, we had covered in our survey in Calcutta, the target was very near subsistence level as witnessed by the fact that, even if the women had been working for five or more years, the family had few durables of any sort.

This would have two consequences: First, the supply curve of labour would be forward falling over a range with respect to the wage rate, and secondly the supply of work would be negatively related to the earnings of the rest of the family, that is, the lower the earnings of the other members, the greater the work effort put forth by the women of the family. The fact that women take up additional work even when marginal wage rates are lower than the average lends substantial support to the first argument. As for the latter hypothesis we have tested it for domestic workers, who stay at home but do a specific job for a number of employers simultaneously.¹⁶ This kind of work is the easiest to find. If a worker is willing, she can almost always find an additional family to work for. For these workers, we tested the hypothesis that women with lower family incomes (excluding their earnings) work more hours and got significant results to support it.

This is precisely the facet which gives women's work its stabilizing character. Whenever the level of family earnings goes below a certain minimum, women, however, unqualified, immobile (because of young children) or uninformed, go out and get some more work even if the marginal rate of return for work is constant or falling.

The work attitude of these women is surprisingly open and adaptable. Not only are they willing to work at very low rates, but they are also willing to learn new skills and reject old taboos in taking it up. We found many instances of caste Hindu women taking up leather work such as making leather bags or leather garments. They also worked at rubber and plastic shoe making. A large number of women, who originally did not belong to fishermen communities, now work in fish-packing workshops. One fairly well-educated woman who had hitherto worked as a private tutor, has recently started taking in some food processing work for a sweet shop in order to supplement her income. Whenever someone introduces a new kind of work in an area, all the women around come forward to learn the skill and take up that work. We found this happening not only with traditional women's work such as stitching or embroidery, but also with electrical fittings, glass work, plastic work and so on.

For a woman, especially for a mother, some measure of subsistence for the family is an imperative, pre-empting all other considerations. Thus low wage rates and long hours do not prevent her from undertaking more work. If the woman herself cannot find the energy and the time to earn her target income, she often makes her children, especially her daughters, assist her. It is a very common sight in Calcutta to see a *Thika* domestic maid, taking her daughter of any age above eight to work along with her. The daughter does part of the work in one house while the woman herself is doing another in the next.

This characteristic of the labour market combined with the fact that there is a large excess supply tends to depress real wage rates.

There does not appear to be any obvious floor for these wage rates. As we have noted above, a fall in wage rates may indeed increase the supply of work; on the other hand, an increase in the size of the family, loss of earnings of another member or inflationary inroads on the family income, all inspire a more intense search for additional work. Lower wage rates do not equilibrate: the excess supply persists and, very likely grows over time.

One sees this happening not just in women's wage work but also in women's unpaid family efforts. In cities they collect not just cowdung but half-burnt coal from the dust-bins. In rural areas, they go further and further away from home to collect some edible leaves, roots, fruit or fish. One of the most visible examples of this reckless, self-forgetting work effort of women is the stream of women engaged in rice smuggling around Calcutta. There are daily risks of police harassment, of seizure of their stocks and of accidents in this illegal trade which involves riding ticketless on trains; but the number of rice smugglers has increased steadily and the participants have, by now, worked out elaborate rituals for it.

Women of poor families have upto now managed to keep the families going by this kind of work effort. This has provided men and the society in general an insurance against unemployment and sickness, against inflation and wage cuts or losses in their petty ventures. This is how, even amongst the pavement dwellers of Calcutta, the family remains united for as long as even five years after their arrival.¹⁶ This is also why in India and especially in West Bengal, we have, as yet, not seen as much misery and suffering as we should have considering the fast growth of the population, the stagnancy of the economy and the rate of inflationary price increase of all essential commodities in the last few years.

That the society has got this temporary relief from the inexorable march of poverty to its logical end in mass misery is no reason to congratulate it or to felicitate the system as such. It is being done at the cost of inhumanly hard work by helpless women. Without being in the least emotional, it must be admitted that this exploitation is being made possible only because of the woman's instinct to save her children from starvation.

That a society is permitting a large section of its citizens to be exploited by taking advantage of their most basic instinct is contemptible enough. Even more so is the fact that, in doing so, it is recklessly neglecting the effect this has on the future human capital of the country. The children who are being forced to help their mothers are not being trained or educated. They can grow up to be nothing but unskilled, uninformed, uneducated fodder for future exploitation. We found that in West Bengal, at least a third of the girl entrants to primary schools drop out in the first year, presumably to help their mothers.

And, the tragedy of it all is that, this work effort of women can only be a temporary check on the march of poverty. When such women's work drives wages down sufficiently low, it will itself start acting as an aggravator of poverty as we describe below. The complacency that one sees around about the basic stability of our society is therefore based on false premises. A spinning top looks stable right upto the moment it keels over.

Women's Work as a Destabilizing Force

Till now, women's work has largely been complementary to the work of other workers and to the economy in general. Its products did not compete with those of organised manufacturing or services activities. Therefore, even when the supply of such labour increased pushing their wage rates down, it did not affect the wages of other workers in the economy. However, the availability of such cheap labour is always a temptation for entrepreneurs to substitute it for the labour they have traditionally used by changing either their product-mix, or production techniques or the organisation of the production process to one which is amenable to the use of such labour.

Traditionally, production of a number of commodities is organised on large mechanised factory lines, because in that form of organisation, there are economies of scale available through mechanical continuous production and through bulk purchases of inputs, training of specialised labour, modern methods of promotion of sale of output, and so on. These advantages are not available to labour-intensive, small-scale, domestic operations but, if the price of labour in such operations falls to sufficiently low levels, then the relative disadvantages of such an organisation can be compensated for by the saving in the cost of labour. Furthermore, advantages of economies of scale in purchases and sales need not be sacrificed if this new organisation is undertaken by a big entrepreneur who merely gets the production part done by such workers through agents without decentralising other operations. Alternatively only particular parts of the total production process need be decentralised: those operations which enjoy scalar economies can continue under the earlier systems. For example, in pharmaceuticals, the industry can get the containers for its products such as ampules, boxes and bottles from the unorganised sector, saving on higher labour costs for them if the firms had produced them on their premises and under their organisation. Once this process starts, it means that employment in the modern, high productivity sector, where workers can hope to get a living wage need not expand proportionately with the output.

If this happens, then the relative importance of modern sector employment will go down further; forcing more workers to work at rates below a living wage. This in turn will induce more female and child labour to enter the labour market to make up the family subsistence

wage but forcing down wages there further. This will facilitate transfer to this kind of labour of more work traditionally done in the factory sector. The process will become self-feeding and unstable.

Obviously not all industries can switch to techniques using this kind of scattered, untrained, low-productivity labour: but, to weaken the bargaining position of labour in the factory sector, all that need happen is that some operations get decentralised and/or new expansion plans and new investment funds are diverted to such products and techniques.

There is an additional reason in our system why entrepreneurs may further prefer these methods of production: this way, they can avoid the burden of factory legislation and corporate taxation. By keeping their operations destabilized, they may escape the notice of all such public regulations.

In switching their operations from the organised to the unorganised sector, entrepreneurs need not use only female unorganised labour. They can also utilize male workers working in small workshops. Indeed, in Calcutta, large engineering firms have always used skilled artisans and workers working in small workshops to make certain parts of their products at wage rates much below those in the organised sector.¹⁷ What is new is that, women now compete with men for some of these jobs in the unorganised sector, by accepting even lower wages. The men are then forced to crowd into the remaining occupations where their wage rates get a beating because of the increased competition.

If this fall in labour cost could lead to the creation of sufficient employment in the unorganised sector, then at some point, the surplus labour would be absorbed, wages would begin to rise and the economy would be able to escape the disequilibrium trap. This is precisely the grounds on which developments of such a nature are being deliberately ignored in a number of countries¹⁸ some of whom even have popular governments. However, it is very likely that there is an upper limit to the extent to which these activities can expand and that limit may well be below the full employment level. Depression of wage rates can lead to full employment if demand for labour is sufficiently price elastic. This in turn would depend partly on the elasticity of demand for the products of the industries using such labour and partly on the feasibility of adopting such labour intensive techniques. On the one hand, for a large country like India with a stagnant domestic demand for industrial goods (mainly because of mass poverty), it is not easy to expand world sales of its output sufficiently to utilize all its labour merely by price competition. On the other hand, for the entrepreneurs engaged in these activities, there is a limit set by the diseconomies and risks involved in decentralisation. Apart from the technical barriers there are risks of creating too many sub-agents, of becoming visible to legal processes and requirements if operations become too large and so on. The operations

are profitable only because they are clandestine and can pay low wages, for example, exports of ready-made garments from India have become profitable mainly because they are now being produced at atrociously low piece rates and by entrepreneurs who avoid taxes and keep overheads low. Once operations become sufficiently large, then their workers may become united and claim better wages and the government will be hard put to ignore their activities. In that case, the trade itself may become unprofitable. The process therefore is likely to settle at a level where it acts as a check to the organised or modern high wages sector, but not expand enough to absorb the entire surplus population.

Some Straws in the Wind

The ideas floated here are still largely in a speculative stage since facts to underpin them are hard to come by. Systematic statistics regarding the unorganised sector are, by its definition, ruled out. On the other hand, for those sectors where data is available, the sex-wise break-up is more often than not unobtainable. However, in the manufacturing industry sector, where such movements are most likely, there are some indications which support our ideas.

As mentioned above, women's employment in the registered factory sector declined significantly between 1964 and 1971. Since then, however, it has started growing fairly fast, even faster than the total factory employment. The interesting fact is that the industry-wise distribution of women workers is changing. Traditionally, textiles employed nearly a quarter of the total women industrial workers. They now employ only about 10 percent of them. It has been alleged that some of the jobs which used to be done by women factory workers in cotton textiles, are now being done by women who work as casual labourers for the same mills. The regular women workers who would have got benefits under our labour laws, have been got rid of on the pretext of modernisation.

Women factory workers are now working increasingly in food processing, tobacco, leather works, paper products, light engineering, electrical and electronic industries. The distinguishing characteristic of the factory jobs that women do is that, in them, women overwhelmingly predominate. Systematic data about male and female wages separately is not easily available but it is well known that women in factories get a lower rate. Interestingly, in industries like tobacco and biri, women workers have become the overwhelming majority ever since a fairly reasonable legal minimum rate has been fixed. However, women get a lower rate than the men and also than the legal minimum. In Calcutta, women get Rs 5-6 per 1000 biris in workshops where the legal minimum is Rs 8.50 per 1000 biris.

While thus in the factory sector women now seem to be taking over some jobs by accepting lower wages, we also found lots of instances of newly developing manufacturing activities either in small workshops

or under the putting-out system which mainly use female and child labour. There is evidence to believe that such activities are increasing fast and diversifying their products. They are now working on a number of products such as ready-made garments, electrical and electronic fittings, glass works, ceramics, leather, plastic and rubber products. All of such products are substitutes or near substitutes for products which traditionally used to be produced by the factory sector.

These stray facts suggest several trends:

1 In industries where women were traditionally a minority, they were allowed to bear the brunt of loss of jobs through rationalisation. At the time of their peak employment in the textile industry in the last twenty years, women were only seven percent of the total workers. However, 67 percent of the textile jobs lost between 1957 to 1969 were those of women. They were thus used by their fellow workers as a cushion against one serious blow from their employers.

2 Women are now coming back in the factory sector as cheap substitutes for the regular workers who had won for themselves some reasonable working conditions from their employers. There is a kind of poetic justice in this: The majority of workers had let these weak minorities take some of the blows intended for workers in general without a protest. Now the same minorities are coming back to cut the ground below their fellow workers who had let them down.

3 Expansion in women's factory employment, however, is itself likely to be a temporary phenomenon. They are, in their turn, likely to be replaced by workers outside in the unorganised sector, who accept even lower wages. Thus in the biri industry, more and more work is being done by out-workers who accept only Rs 2 per 1000 biris. In a rubber shop factory in Calcutta, the women who work at the factory get a time rate of about Rs 6 per day. The same work, however is being done increasingly by other out-worker women who get piece rates and earn about half that amount per day with a daily output similar to that of the regular workers. Since this possibility exists, it is unavoidable that future expansion of such industries will be with more out-workers who are not only cheaper but save overheads and, presumably taxes.

Conclusion

The situation described above, in all its inhumanity, is, however, a comfortable one for the ruling classes. The politicians can point with pride to the increase in employment; the industrialist congratulates himself on discovering a bottomless pool of cheap labour, while the planners and professional economists are happy in the increasing adoption, according to the book, of labour-intensive techniques. And all the while the intelligentsia continue in their dogmatic slumbers cosseted by the services of cheap domestic labour. We believe that all of us are in for an unpleasant shock; the growth of women's work in the unorganised

sector does nothing to reduce poverty and contains within it the seeds of a state of increasing misery. It is not claimed here that anything like a proper substantiation of this thesis has been achieved. To start with there is very little data available in this field and, unfortunately, detailed information is available only about the relatively more organised and vocal groups.

The groups that we have been concerned with, especially the women, are silent and the nature of the problem is generally ignored by the academics and by politicians. Of course, there is no dearth of anecdotal reportage making a sob story of it all. That women are mainly concerned in it is supposed to, and probably does, pluck at the heart strings more poignantly. It has been the purpose of this paper to pursue the logic of the economic situation, not to indulge in tear jerking but if tears are to be shed let them be shed for the whole of our society. The women concerned deserve, indeed demand, our utmost admiration.

- ¹ I C S S R, *The Report of the Committee on Status of Women in India*, Chapter on Roles Rights and Opportunities for Economic Participation.
- ² Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, *Indian Labour Statistics* 1975, Table No 2.3, "Employment of Public and Private Sectors 1962-74", p 54.
- ³ The index number of real earnings of factory workers with 1961 = 100 was 103 in 1963 and 101 in 1971. Labour Statistics 1975, op.cit., Table No 4.5, p 85.
- ⁴ C S O, Government of India, *Annual Survey of Industries*.
- ⁵ O P Vig, *India's Population*, Sterling Publishers (P) Limited, 1976, pp 88-89. S Chandrashekhar, *India's Population—Facts, Problems and Policies*, Meenakshi Prakashan, 1970, p 24.
- ⁶ Rev T R Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Vol II, sixth edition, p 314.
- ⁷ This survey was financed by the I C S S R for the Committee on Unemployment.
- ⁸ Between 1947 and 1963, about 1.5 million refugees settled in the Calcutta urban area.
- ⁹ Calcutta's organised employment outside the public sector grew by 18 percent between 1960-1971, while the All India figure grew by 38 percent in that period.
- ¹⁰ Dandekar and Rath, "Poverty in India: Dimensions and Trends" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 1971.
- ¹¹ See the forthcoming report on *The Survey of Unorganised Women in Calcutta, 1975-76* by Nirmala Banerjee.
- ¹² This is excluding workers who live with the employers' families.
- ¹³ We tested the two hypotheses that different age groups earn significantly different wages and that more experienced people earn more: but the results were insignificant in the case of each kind of job for both the hypotheses.
- ¹⁴ All interviewees were asked whether their mothers and mothers-in-law had ever worked and if so, at what kind of jobs.
- ¹⁵ Such workers are called *Thika* workers. The hypothesis could not be tested for other kinds of workers, because a number of them had complained about their inability to find as much work as they would like to do.
- ¹⁶ S Mukherjee, *Survey of Pavement Dwellers in Calcutta*, C M D A 1975.
- ¹⁷ A N Bose, *Calcutta's Informal Sector*, World Employment Programme Research Working Paper.
- ¹⁸ Ingrid Palmer and Victoria Goddard have pointed out to me that in their work in Indonesia and Italy respectively they found that there also, such activities were widespread.

KARTHIGESU SIVATHAMBY

The Politics of a Literary Style

THE Tanittamil movement was a purist literary movement started by Maraimalai Atikal (1875-1950) to rid Tamil writing of the various non-Tamil especially Sanskrit words, which have gained currency in ordinary usage. The term 'Tanittamil' means 'pure Tamil'; a literal translation of this compound form would be 'only or exclusively Tamil'. Maraimalai Atikal's obsession with the use of 'exclusively Tamil words' was such that he translated his own name, Vedachalam, as Maraimalai. The prefix 'Swami' which he took on when he renounced lay life was translated as 'Atikal' and was added on as a suffix to the word Maraimalai. Thus his name bore a similarity with the names of ascetics mentioned in early Tamil literature, such as Kavunti Atikal, Ilanko Atikal and so on.

Without going into the problems of historical linguistics and of etymology we could, as readers, characterise this as 'a style of writing'. Indeed Maraimalai Atikal himself calls it the "scrupulously pure Tamilly style."¹

The story of how this movement began is retold in the two biographies on him and in a book written by his daughter.²

In the year 1916, when his daughter Neelambikai was 13, one day the father (Atikal) while strolling in the garden, sang one of the famous

Arutpas⁸ of Ramalinka Swamikal, which begins with the lines "Petra Tai tanai maka marantalam". As he finished reciting, he suddenly realised that the word "tekam" (Sanskrit deha: body) occurring in the second line had really brought down the literary merit of the poem; he told the daughter that the original Tamil word for body "yakkai" would have been excellent in that place. Continuing his comment on the need for a textual substitution he is said to have told the daughter that because of the influx of loan words Tamil language has lost its pristine purity and that many 'genuine' Tamil words have thus been lost to the language and its speakers for ever. The daughter, a good student of the father and a great admirer of his literary views, exclaimed, "If so, we should avoid all loan words. Let's make an effort." The father agreed. Thus was born the pure Tamil movement.

The Ideology of the Movement

The drama of the birth of the movement, however fascinating it might be, should not blind us to certain more deep seated factors connected with it. By the year 1916, Maraimalai Atikal was already a reputed Tamil scholar, having written a number of books. This dramatic beginning should not minimise the importance of the ideology behind the movement.

Maraimalai Atikal, in his English preface to the Pure Tamil version of an adaptation of some Addison's Essays, published in Tamil under the title "*Cintanaikkaturaikal*" lists some of the reasons why he chose this style of writing.

The translation was from the first, made very faithful to the original but in this edition it was made still more so in a few places where (I had) handled it somewhat freely in the previous edition. This was done with a double purpose, at first, to show the futility of the complaint put in by Brahmins and many misled students that Tamil has no sufficient quantity of words to express the meanings of English words used in dealing with a variety of high class subjects and secondly to bring home to their mind the fact that Tamil is an independent language with a rich store of words capable of expressing in a skilful hand all kinds of thoughts that appear in the different branches of learning. Instead of arguing about this fact with prejudiced persons, is it not better to show the fact itself in practice? Accordingly the Tamil style of this edition of essays has been rendered extremely pure by eliminating all Sanskrit words that mingled in the original edition at the rate of four or five percent.⁴

While seeking to expand on each of the arguments put forward for the need of a pure Tamil style, he made the following observation: Here may step in some brahmins, who, ever watching for an opportunity to cry down Tamil, put forth the worn out argument that Tamil, is not as sufficiently rich as to express without the help of

Sanskrit all the ramifications of modern thought brought into existence by English, and that even when English loathes not to adopt as many words as it needs from various languages all over the world, it is against the principle of expediency of contest for keeping Tamil pure and intact. ...and yet as we come to study the life of the ancient Tamils from their most ancient literary work, I mean the Tolkappiyam, the age of which on the best internal evidence goes back to 1500 B C (*sic*) we see them already settled into a highly civilized community for the most part peaceful, but for a few infrequent feuds between one Tamil king and another. It is to this continuity of a peaceful and highly civilized life enjoyed by the Tamils that we owe the existence of the Tamil language still in its pristine purity, vigour and glory. To shape their life into a symmetrical form the English had to depend largely on the help of other nations and so they did not lag behind to take words from whichever language they could lay their hands on. But the Tamils never depended likewise upon others...⁵

It is clear that Maraimalai Atikal had started the Tanittamil Movement because of his unassailable conviction that the pristine Tamil civilization had to be kept intact by writing in a pure-Tamil style. It is also clear that he was against the Brahmins, who thought that Tamil was not so great.

Maraimalai Atikal's daughter in her book, 'Tanittamil Katturai-*kal*' (Essays in Pure Tamil) which was corrected and printed by the father himself,⁶ has given all the above facts presented by her father⁷ and argues that the movement was aimed at the preservation of the purity of Tamil. In the chapter on "Sanskrit should not mix with Tamil" she makes pointed reference to those Brahmins who have "vilified Tamil by polluting it with Sanskrit words."⁸ Furthermore, in his book "Velalar Nakarikam", Maraimalai Atikal has as the last chapter, the topic "*Association with Aryans is bad for the Tamil people and the Tamil language.*"⁹ In this chapter he presents an all embracing philosophy of life for the Tamils (especially in the religious sphere) to enable them to demonstrate in everyday life a pure-Tamil living. The pure-Tamil movement declared to be so much committed to the upliftment of the Tamils as a race (distinct from the Aryans of North India) cannot be credited a chance beginning. It seems to have its roots in the social history of Tamilnadu.

Early 20th Century Social Structure

Any student of modern South Indian History would have unmistakeably responded to the above statements on the purity of the Tamil culture and against the Brahmins of South India and recognised this movement as a literary manifestation of the deep seated political and social problems of the Tamils of early 20th century.

To begin at the beginning, let us have a preliminary account of the caste structure of Tamilnad. As Andre Beteille sums it up "the population of Tamilnad can be broadly divided into three groups, the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins, and the Harijans (or Adi-Dravidas)."¹⁰ This three-fold division of society" provides perhaps the broadest basis for "communal" politics in Tamilnad".¹¹ The non-Brahmin group consists of various caste groups and thereby represents a broader spectrum of cultural variations and appear to be on the whole less cohesive than the two other primary segments.¹² The term 'non-Brahmin' at times meant all those castes of people who were not Brahmins but at other times it referred only to the most articulate of the non-Brahmin castes, namely the non-Brahmin high caste groups.

A study on "Politics and change in the Madras Presidency 1834-1894" has shown that in the last decade of the 19th century and in the early years of 20th century, the politics of the Madras Presidency was characterised by the collapse of the communal amity seen at the time of the formation of the Congress and the rise of communal politics which revealed the suspicion and hatred both the non-Brahmin high castes and depressed castes had towards the Brahmins.¹⁴ The causes for this communal tension were the sacerdotal position the Brahmins held in the Madras Presidency and the accusation that Brahmins by their education and position had kept others down.¹⁵

Suntheralingam is of the opinion that "one consequence of this rivalry between Brahmins and non-Brahmins was the emergence of regional and linguistic separatism."¹⁶ Suntheralingam, of course, goes on to mention the cry Travancore for Travancoreans, but as we have already observed in Maraimalai Atikal's 'manifesto' of the Tanittamil movement, the Brahmin-non-Brahmin conflict within Tamilnadu was leading to regional and linguistic chauvinism which ultimately leads to political separatism as voiced by the Dravida Kazhakam (DK) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam (DMK).

Perhaps it is easy now to understand the political overtones of the Tanittamil movement. In fact, the relationship is very explicit. In tracing the intellectual background to the non-Brahmin movement and Tamil separatism, Irshick has observed three major factors playing a decisive role in the intellectual escalation of this movement.

Role of Christian Missionaries

The most important of this was the Tamilian consciousness created by the Christian missionaries,¹⁷ especially by Rev Robert Caldwell (1819-1891) and Rev G U Pope (1820-1907) both missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.¹⁸ The first book written by Caldwell was "The Tinnevely Shanars" (1849). This provides a clue to the thinking of Caldwell; in this book he maintains that the shanars being very much a part of the Brahministic fold could be easily

Christianized. This book is important in that it highlights the fact that some of the missionaries thought it was their primary duty to keep the Tamilian Hindus away from the sway of the Brahmins before embarking upon real conversion. In his "A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages" first published in 1856 and revised by him in 1875, he brings in the concept of the Dravidians as a race and of the Dravidian languages as a family of languages distinct from the Aryans and the Aryan languages respectively. In the Introduction to his magnum opus he said "The word I have chosen is 'Dravidian' from Dravida, the adjectival form of Dravida."¹⁹ The manner in which Caldwell wrote about the Dravidian languages in general and Tamil in particular, helped to a great extent the growth of the notion relating to the greatness of Tamil language, literature and civilization. Commenting on the problem of Sanskrit infiltration into Tamil he said "Tamil can readily dispense with a greater part of the whole of Sanskrit and by dispensing with it rise to a purer and more refined style".²⁰ One could see almost a precedent when he speaks about the difference between classical and colloquial Tamil. He says, "classical Tamil contains less Sanskrit, not more, than the colloquial dialect. *It affects purism and national independence; and its refinements are all ab intra.*"

Rev G U Pope by his translation of the Tiruvaykām provided a moral booster for the Tamils.²¹ As an appendix to the translation he added a note (Note XI) on the Saivasiddhanta system of philosophy in which he eulogized that system of philosophy by saying that it "is the most intrinsically valuable of all the regions of India."²² The Christian missionaries thus created an intellectual atmosphere in which the non-Brahmin Hindus began to feel that they were inheritors of a great cultural heritage which had been polluted by Brahminism.²³ There were instances where the British officials in Madras "helped to elevate the cultural position of the non-Brahmins."²⁴

Vellala's Response to Social Discrimination

The other major factor that contributed to the anti-Brahmin feeling was the determined attempt on the part of the Vellalas to exert their power in the social and political spheres. Socially they were subjected to a great humiliation by the Brahmins who categorised them (the Vellalas) as Sudras, the lowest of the caste groups in the *Caturvarna* hierarchy. Besides this social discrimination there were other factors too. "They were second as a caste group only to the Brahmins and thus in a position to feel particularly threatened by the Tamil Brahmins. In certain areas such as Tinnevely district, a seat of Vellala strength they were almost as orthodox as the Brahmins. And they were in an ideal position to reap the advantages if the Brahmins were toppled."²⁵

The intellectual precursor of the social and political attempt of the Vellalas to better their position was the 'academic' movement started

by Rao Bahadur P Sunderampillai (1855-1897), Professor of Philosophy, Maharaja's College, Trivandrum. Sunderampillai's writings (Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature, Age of Gnanasambandar and Manonmaniam) tried to establish the historical antiquity of the Dravidian civilization. It is of immense interest to note that Sunderampillai was the author of the theory that *Ramayana* was a work "written in order to proclaim the powers of the Aryans and to represent their rivals and enemies the Dravidians, who had attained a high degree of civilization at that period, in the worst possible colour."²⁶

This period saw also the publication of a series of articles in Madras Review (from 1895-1901) under the title "Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago" by V Kanakasabhaipillai, a Tamil scholar from Sri Lanka settled in South India. This series of articles, published in a book form by the author in 1904, used all the evidences in Cankam literature which were then edited and published by a *smarta* Brahmin scholar U V Caminataiyar and by C W Thamotherampillai, another Sri Lankan Tamil scholar working in South India. Writing on the features of the period "Eighteen Hundred Years Ago" Kanakasabhaipillai remarked that it was the Augustan period of Tamil literature and "that the Tamil people acquired wealth and civilization at this early period by their commercial intercourse with foreign nations such as those inhabited by the Arabs, Greeks, Romans and Javanese".²⁷ He added that "to the Aryan races it was a period of humiliation and to Brahminism one of painful struggle for existence."²⁸

The publication of these works on Tamilian history which threw some light on the civilization of the community and its literature, and which unlike in the case of any other non-Aryan community in India records the continuity of the non-Aryan strands in Indian culture, beginning from pre-Christian to modern times, began to irk the conscience of Brahmin scholars. M Srinivasa Aiyangar, who in his book "Tamil Studies or Essays on the History of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature" (1914) had highlighted the role of the Vellalas in that early history, observed with a sense of regret that "within the last fifteen years a new school of Tamil scholars has come into being consisting mainly of admirers and castemen of the late lamented professor and antiquary Mr Sunderampillai of Trivandrum. Their object had been to disown and to disprove any trace of indebtedness to the Aryans, to exalt the civilization of the ancient Tamils, to distort in the name of historical research the current traditions and literature, to pooh pooh the views of former scholars which support the Brahminization of the Tamil race."²⁹ It is significant to note that at the start of the book Aiyangar discusses the original meaning of the word Dravidian saying that at the start the ethnological application of the name "Dravida" was restricted and limited to a particular class, namely the Tamil speaking Brahmins and that it was Dr Caldwell who extended it to mean a linguistic group.³⁰

It is also of interest to note that the Christian missionaries of the period provided firm support to these non-Brahmin scholars especially to Professor Sunderampillai for whose work *Manonmaniyam*, a Tamil drama based on the plot of Lord Lytton's "Lost Tales of Miletus," Rev GU Pope had written a foreword.

New View on Saivasiddhanta Philosophy

Besides this historiographical trend which brought to light the non-Aryan Dravidian elements in Tamil literature and history, there was also a movement to identify the Saivasiddhanta philosophy as an exclusively Tamil contribution to Indian culture. Dr Pope's comment on this has already been quoted.⁸¹

"Saiva Siddhanta is the name by which Tamil Saivism is known"⁸². Though the primary sources are said to be the twenty-eight Sivagamas, the real exposition of the philosophy is found in Tamil texts written in the 13th century A D. But the basis for the philosophical codification lay in the hymns of the Saiva saints of the 7th-9th century A D. Inspired by Pope, the emerging Vellala 'elite' saw in this school of philosophy, a reply to the Brahministic Vedanta school of thought. J M Nallaswami Pillai (1864-1920), a Vellala scholar, brought out the Tamil translation of the Sivagnana Siddhiyar, the basic treatise of this school of philosophy.⁸³ As he himself admits in the introduction to the translation, the popularization of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy was first started by scholars like Professor Sunderampillai, Pandit D Savariroyan, Virduai Sivajnana Yogigal and T Ponnembalam Pillai. It was the contention of these scholars that the Sanskrit writings on this subject, which were considered the primary source by some, were translations from Tamil into Sanskrit⁸⁴.

Thus, there was a general intellectual awakening to highlight the 'distinctively' Dravidian contribution, as against the Brahmin 'attempt' to nullify, if not play them down. The biography of Maraimalai Atikal unmistakeably reveals that he was an intellectual heir to this movement.

Maraimalai Atikal and the Non-Brahmin Movement

Maraimalai Atikal and Professor Sunderampillai were both students of Tamil (not contemporaneously) under the same teacher V Narayanaswamipillai of Nagapatnam. Maraimalai Atikal established personal contact with Sunderampillai after reading his work *Manonmaniyam* and was once a guest of Sunderampillai. Maraimalai Atikal got his first appointment as a Tamil teacher at an English school at Trivandrum on the recommendation of the Professor. But due to ill health Maraimalai Atikal had to return to his hometown.

It is interesting to note that as a young man the Atikal used to contribute to a weekly published at Nagapatnam—*Dravida Mantiri* (the Dravidian Minister or Royal Advisor). The socio-political connotations of the name of the journal is indeed very obvious.

It was Maraimalai Atikal who was responsible for the formation of an organizational base for the popularization of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. Having already come under the tutelage of Coolai Soma-sundara Nayakar, a great Saiva Siddhantist of that time and having been the editor of the *Siddhanta Deepikai*, a journal devoted to Saiva Siddhanta published by J M Nallaswamipillai (Nallaswamipillai edited the journal "Siddhanta Deepika" in English) Maraimalai Atikal was primarily responsible for the establishment of the Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam in 1905. It is said that the word "Samajam" was used purposely to enable the organisation to spread its activities in North India too. It is also significant that the names of such religion-based revivalist organizations of North India used the term "Samaj" for example Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and Samajam is the Tamilised form of the word "Samaj".

Tirunavukkarasu, his son and biographer, mentions that from 1912 onwards Maraimalai Atikal never engaged the services of any Brahmins for conducting any rituals, but as a good Saivaite who believed in their indispensibility used to invite non-Brahmin priests known as "Saivak-urukkals" to perform them.⁸⁵ He carried forward his anti Brahmin activities by giving public lectures on "Tamilian Civilization" and the "Dravidian Civilization." These lectures were directed against the Brahmin action of maintaining that all non-Brahmin Tamils, irrespective of their caste, were Sudras. In the Tamil preface to the first edition "Vellalar Nakarikam" (The Civilization of the Vellalas) Atikal specifically mentions that he had written it to highlight the great contribution of the Vellala community to Tamil culture. At the close of the book, in the penultimate chapter he says that anyone who leads a perfect life of love and vegetarianism, irrespective of their caste, could become Vellalas. Though it could justifiably be said that this view reflects his liberal attitudes, it is important to remember that many other castes (like Akampadiyar, Kallar and others) were also making an attempt to call themselves Vellalas. This view could be taken as a sop to them.

Anyhow, it is clear that by intellectual inheritance and conviction Maraimalai Atikal was an anti-Brahmin, pro-Tamil scholar. The Tanittamil movement, as expounded and popularised by him was only an extension of the intellectual social and political activities connected with the non-Brahmin movement.⁸⁶ Though in fact it is possible that the Tanittamil movement had a chance beginning as described in the Atikal's biographies, it cannot be denied that it flowed from the logic of the history of the non-Brahmin movement.

Political Background to the Movement

Very revealing indeed is the political context in which this movement was started, Montagu's diary entries though made on 14th

December 1917, provide the political background. What he says must be true of 1916 too, the year the Tanittamil movement of Maraimalai Atikal was started. Montague records that "the great feature of this place is the terrific influence and fear the non-Brahmins entertain of the Brahmins. That is the great feature in which this country (South India) differs from any I have yet visited."⁴⁰

It was in the year 1916 that non-Brahmin aspirations were organised and politically directed by the formation of "a joint-stock company to be called the South Indian Peoples Association Ltd for the purpose of publishing English, Telugu and Tamil newspapers to voice non-Brahmin grievances" and "an organization called the South Indian Liberal Federation, whose purpose was to promote the political interests of non-Brahman caste Hindus."⁴¹ SILF was later known as the Justice Party, by the name of the English weekly it published. The rise of this non-Brahman organization led to serious debate and discussion within the Indian National Congress and in September 1917 was formed the Madras Presidency Association the chief aim of which was to place before Montague a scheme of reforms designed to give non-Brahmans full communal representation."⁴²

Of course, Tirunavukkarasu has maintained that Maraimalai Atikal had never attended any meetings of the Justice Party nor spoken on their platform, but he himself admits that his father had welcomed the activities of P Thiyagaraja Chettiar, one of the founders of the Justice Party. We therefore have to come to the inescapable conclusion that the Pure Tamil Movement started by Maraimalai Atikal was bound up with the general political trends of the non-Brahmin movement in the Madras Presidency.

Attitude of the Nationalists

But this is only one aspect of the story as far as the movement for the use of Tanittamil and the general use of Tamil as an effective medium for social and political communication is concerned. For details regarding the other side of the story, we must turn to the national movement for Indian Independence.

It is common knowledge today that the Indian Independence movement was preceded by a general renaissance in Indian culture and one of the most important aspects of that renaissance was the emergence of revivalist movements among every major language — group of the subcontinent.

Conscious efforts to revitalise Tamil as an effective means of communication among the Tamils of South India, could be said to have started with Munsiff Vedanayakampillai of Mayavaram (1824-1889).⁴³ Another notable author who campaigned for better use of Tamil and who, in fact, had written against the glorification of Sanskrit as a 'language of the gods' and the relegation of Tamil as a not very effective

language was V G Suriyanarayana Sastri (1871-1903), Tamil Pandit at Christian College, Madras. His love for Tamil was so great that he went by the Tamil translation of his Sanskrit name—Paritimatakalaigñar. This was done before Swami Vedachalam adopted the translated form Maraimalai Atikal. In fact, Tirunavukkarasu mentions that Maraimalai Atikal had great respect for Suriyanarayana Sastri for the latter's love of Tamil. For these, Paritimatakalaigñar was only a Brahmin.

Bharati's Contribution

With Subramania Bharati (1882-1921) Tamil literature enters a new phase. He is one of those major poets who imbibing the best of the linguistic, literary and cultural traditions of a language enrich it by their contributions and redirect the course of literary development by giving expression to new hopes and themes and by widening the compass of literature. Subramania Bharati, rightly referred to as Makarākavi (Major Poet) was in more than one sense the Rabindranath Tagore of Tamilnadu. He was an ardent lover of Tamil but that love never broke itself loose from the general Indian framework. For him Tamil was one of the "Aryasampath" (Treasures of Aryavarta). He wanted better and more use of Tamil and he used his poetry and prose to achieve this mission. His preface to his epic poem *Pancali Capatam* shows that he wants to democratise Tamil as a language possessing literatures which could be understood by each and every speaker of the language.

But Subramania Bharathi was a Brahmin. Tirunavukkarasu mentions that Subramania Bharati and his friend Somasundara Bharati (a great Vellala anti-Brahmin activist himself) approached Maraimalai Atikal to get a foreword for an anthology of Subramania Bharati's poems. Perhaps Maraimalai Atikal had refused to oblige. The biographer is evidently at great pains to retrieve his father "from an act of obvious tactlessness."⁴⁴ It is also of some interest to note that Maraimalai Atikal does not make any reference whatsoever to Bharati and his contribution to revitalise Tamil. Maraimalai Atikal lived a full 39 years after the death of Bharathi. By 1950 even the DMK had accepted Bharati as a progressive poet.

Subramania Siva's Campaign

The most significant of all the Tamil revivalist movements organised by the Nationalists is the movement propagated by Subramania Siva, the extremist nationalist fighter. M P Sivagnanam in his book "Vitutalaipporil Tamil Valarnta Varalaru" (The History of the Development of Tamil in the Freedom Struggle) gives a detailed account of Siva's love of Tamil. Sivagnanam quotes from "Gnanabhanu" the monthly edited and published by Siva.⁴⁶ In the November 1915 issue of 'Gnanabhanu, Siva wrote:

Language is the soul of a community. If the Tamil Language is destroyed, the greatness of the Tamils will be lost. For those Bharataputras (sons of the soil) who shamelessly say that Tamil does not possess certain necessary words, teach them those words by finding them out through research. If there are no appropriate terms available, create with the grace of Goddess Tamil, many nouns.

Let your tongue speak Tamil only. Let the quill you hold write Tamil only. Let your heart speak Tamil only. Let Dame Tamil with her Grace protect you.⁴⁶

Earlier, in July 1915 he published the following advertisement in Gnanabhanu:

Five Rupees

Can you write in Pure Tamil? If so, rush in. A lover of Tamil has come forward to offer five rupees (as a prize) for anyone who writes, not less than eight pages on the history of St Tiruvalluvar (author of the famous didactic work Tirukkural) in our Gnanabhanu, which uses only pure Tamil words with no mixtures of words from other languages like Sanskrit.

Even those Tamilised forms of other languages, as for instance "kayam" derived from the Sanskrit Gaja, should not be used. In short, only those exclusively Tamil words which have no connection whatsoever with any other language, should be used.

It is hereby notified that the essays should be sent in to reach Gnanabhanu office before the 15th of Avani (August-September). The prize winning entry will be published in our journal. For any further particulars relating to this competition, please write to the undermentioned.

Manager, 'Gnanabhanu'

Mylapore, Madras⁴⁷

Even though Subramania Siva had unambiguously stated that he does not use any words of Sanskrit origin and that he writes only pure Tamil words, the advertisement, as much as his other writings, contained a number of words of Sanskrit origin.

But it is not his proficiency of Tamil that is under discussion for, as a matter of fact, even some of the words used by Maraimalai Atikai such a great scholar, were not pure Tamil words. (For instance a glance through his works confronts us with words like manam, aciriyar teivamatchi, tarumanul, matu which are Tamilised forms of Sanskrit). But it is his sincerity of purpose that is important. The career of Subramania Siva clearly indicates he was, like the great nationalists of the Tilak era a man of indubitable conviction. M P Sivagnam's account of Subramania Siva reveals to us how he had fought against the popular Tamil daily "Swadesamitran" when it refused to publish this advertisement.⁴⁸

This episode reveals to us that even within the Congress Movement there were Tamil nationalists who were for the use of pure Tamil words.

Besides Subramania Siva there were other nationalists who had insisted upon the use of Tamil in political writings and on political platforms. One such nationalist was Tiru V Kalayanasundra Mudaliyar (1883-1953) popularly referred to as Tiru Vi Ka. He was responsible for the adoption of a resolution at the public meeting held by the Madras Presidency Association at Tanjavur on March 20-21, 1948, that thenceforth all Tamils, when addressing meetings should speak only in Tamil. Desabakthan, the political organ of the MPA started in 1917 with Tiru Vi Ka as editor, campaigned for more and better use of Tamil. The campaign started by Desabhakthan was so effective that the first Tamil speech in the legislature was made by Saleem PV Narasimma Aiyar. This is in marked contrast to the highly studied English speeches and writings of the leaders of the non-Brahman movement.

It could objectively be argued that the efforts of Tiru Vi Ka came in as a necessary response to the Tanitamil movement of Maraimalai Atikal because Tiru Vi Ka, though a nationalist, was on very friendly terms with Maraimalai Atikal⁴⁹. Tiru Vi Ka had never hesitated to praise Atikal for his love of Tamil and knowledge of Saiva Sidhantha⁵⁰.

But that cannot be said of Subramania Siva's campaign for a Pure Tamil style for it was really started in 1915 whereas Maraimalai Atikal's campaign was started only in 1916. The commitment of the Congress High command to the revival of national languages is seen in Mahatma Gandhi's response to an address of welcome presented in English at a reception held at Mayuram in 1915.⁵¹ He said nationalism cannot be developed by "killing your national languages and using English in their place."

This incident also brings to light the type of influence the English educated nationalists, both Brahmins and non-Brahmins, had on the freedom movement in its early stages. Thus it becomes clear that besides the protagonists of the anti-Brahmin movement, some of the nationalists too by their commitment to the development of the national languages, had placed themselves in a situation to fight for a genuine Tamil revival which would not go against an all-India perspective. The nationalists too strived to adopt a style of Tamil writing that would reflect the genius of the language and the cultural consciousness of the people.

Comparative Study of the Two Trends

This interest shown by two opposing groups in raising the cry for Tanitamil demands that we make a comparative study of both the trends so as to see the points of agreement and areas of dissimilarity.

An analysis of the language style of these two schools reveals that the writings of the nationalists showed a number of Tamilised words of Sanskrit origin whereas Maraimalai Atikal used more pure

Tamil words. The conscious use of pure Tamil words resulted in a style that was hardly intelligible to the average Tamilian. Maraimalai Atikal's writings could be understood only by those who are conversant with the high literary style. But mention should be made here of the style of writing adopted by TiruVi Ka. His was a chaste style with a much smaller number of words of Sanskrit origin. M P Sivagnanam the founder of the South Indian Tamil Arasu Katchi (the Party for Tamil (ian) Rule) in his already quoted work makes the following observation.

Great scholars like Partimatkalaignar and Maraimalai Atikal wrote books for the Pandits in Tamil language, in which they all had a common interest. They had no contact whatsoever with the common masses. Therefore they had the policy of writing in pure Tamil which had no mixture of Sanskrit words. But the position of nationalist leaders like V V S Aiyar, Bharatiyar and Subramania Siva was totally different. These leaders had contact with the common masses, published journals and wrote books to propagate patriotism and anti-imperialistic feeling among the people. They therefore did not want to write in pure Tamil style which did not permit the use of Sanskrit words that had gained currency. Because of this it was nothing but natural that their "pure Tamil" policy was directed against English rule. We could expect nothing else from them."⁶²

Sivagnanam is correct in his assessment. For Maraimalai Atikal it was a case of Tamil for its own sake, whereas for the nationalists it was a case of using Tamil to communicate with the Tamil people. It is a case of political conviction deciding the pattern of literary style.

Before taking up the question of the difference in attitudes towards the British and their rule, we should examine the potentiality of "Pure Tamil", as envisaged and propagated by Maraimalai Atikal, as a vehicle of creative expression. It is true that Atikal wrote two works of fiction entitled "Nakanattarasi Kumutavalli" (Kumatavalli, the queen of the land of Nagas) and Kokilampal Katitankal (The letters of Kokilampal). They merit study because of the fact that they were literary exercises undertaken with the sole aim of proving that there could be Tamil novels too. Maraimalai Atikal was no creative artist and both the works are testimony to the negation of the fundamental principle of literary creativity, that is, that words should have associative meanings. This could never be achieved by employing fossilised, unintelligible expressions. The consciously attempted pure Tamil style was artificial and forced. If Maraimalai Atikal had attempted to edit a well-circulated Tamil daily, he would have realised the limitations of his style.

Attitude to British Rule

One of the basic differences between these two groups lay in their attitude towards the British rule in India. In terms of the history of the

freedom struggle, the Tanittamil movement was started during the Tilak era and carried on during the Gandhian era. Quite obviously the pre-1920 fighters like V O C Chidambaram, V V S Aiyar, Subramania Bharati and Subramania Siva were uncompromisingly anti-British. But this cannot be said of Maraimalai Atikal. According to his son, he was supporting the freedom movement till 1920 but from 1935 had turned an ardent supporter of British rule in India.⁵⁸ The year 1920 is a significant one as far as the non-Brahmin movement is concerned, for it was in the year 1921 that the first non-Brahmin government of Madras was formed. After the India Act of 1935 the congress decided to accept office in 1937. "When the Congress accepted office, Rajaji, the veteran Brahmin leader, became Chief Minister of Madras and other Brahmins were appointed to the Ministry"⁵⁴ In the conference on Saivism held at Tiripatirippuliyur in 1929 Atikal had openly attacked Gandhi's Khaddar Movement. Furthermore when the Second World War broke out "at the meeting organised at the express wish of the Governor and held at the city hall 'for praying to a God for a British victory' the Atikal made that prayer in a very fervent manner in English"⁵⁵ The Atikal was also against the Non-Cooperation Movement. His attitude towards the British is well brought out in his English preface to his work on 'Tamilar Matam' (The Tamilian creed).

Finally, the Tamils must take note that the British government is the only best government which has been directed by Providence to rule impartially over all the Indian peoples who are torn by endless caste distinctions and irreconcilable racial and religious differences.⁵⁶

This was written in the year 1941. One could say that Maraimalai Atikal had a sincere admiration for the English, for in 1925 he had said:

"Except the Hindu, all others are progressive especially the English whose advancement in the knowledge of arts and industries, of social, moral and religious principles is simply marvellous"⁵⁷

It should be remembered in this context that he wrote fairly long prefaces in English for each of his works written in 'scrupulously pure Tamil style'.

But on the problem of caste he was decidedly liberal. In his work "Palantamilkkolkaiye Caiva Camayam" he chastised some high caste non-Brahmins for their attitude towards the depressed castes.⁵⁸ In 'Vellar Nakarikam' he argued that all who are pure (in terms of love and vegetarianism) could become Vellas⁵⁹. He was also interested in Harijan welfare.⁶⁰ But this liberalism earned him many enemies from among the high caste non-Brahmin scholars.⁶¹ The nationalists never failed to pinpoint this weakness of the non-Brahmin movement. A Madhaviah, the famous Tamil novelist and writer in his contribution to the Annual supplement of Swadesamitran of 1917 put it rather succinctly:

"Are you treating the Pariah in the same manner you want the Brahmin to treat you?"⁶²

Subramania Bharati in one of his articles said:

In this situation, some of our Saiva Vellalas who are in the non-Brahmin movement, while claiming that the Brahmins are trying to divide the Tamils, are themselves refusing to eat with and marry among the other (non-Brahmin) castes.⁶³

Whereas the freedom fighters wanted Tamilian consciousness as a first step towards nationalism, the regionalistic Tamilian activists launched activities which were decidedly more preservationist in outlook. The Conferences held on subjects like Tamil Religion and Tamil Weddings are illustrative of this fact. Naturally, Maraimalai Atikal, played a very important part in both these conferences.⁶⁴

Later Developments

All these pro-Tamil, anti-Brahmin, anti-Congress activities should naturally have made the Tanitamil movement highly successful and its founder and propagandist a highly respected mentor among those advocating the "Dravidian" political interest.

At the start things were going predictably smooth. E V Ramasamy Naicker, once an ardent Congressman, left the Congress in 1925 on the issue of communal representation and started campaigning for the neglected Dravidians. EVR's movement ultimately took the shape of Cuyamariyatal Iyakkam (Self-Respect Movement) in 1929 and from that time onwards he and his followers started campaigning for the social and political identity of the Tamils on a "rationalist anti-religious and anti-superstition" basis. They propagated the philosophy of atheism and condemned the entire Hindu faith as being a Brahmin machination to enslave the Tamils.⁶⁵ To a theist like Maraimalai Atikal, this was intolerable. The opposition to the Self-Respect Movement was first voiced by Tiru Vi Ka. Because of his personal conviction and because of the contacts he had with Tiru Vi Ka (even though he was a Congressite but he was a non-Brahmin) Maraimalai Atikal started attacking the emerging self Respect Movement. The first attempt at such an attack was made in 1928 when EVR had not formally launched his campaign.⁶⁶ 'Dravidan' the official organ of EVR's movement, started attacking Maraimalai Atikal. This very same publication which had at one time eulogized Atikal now attacked him mercilessly. It was their contention that "theism, faith in God, Hinduism (both Saivism and Vaishnavism) all belong to the Aryan Brahmins. Maraimalai Atikal who supports these is a slave of the Aryans. Only those who support atheism are genuine Tamils."⁶⁷ Dravidan's opposition to Maraimalai Atikal was so vehement and Atikal's response to it equally furious that it led to certain legal proceedings for criminal intimidation. The accused was the Atikal. But due to the inter-

vention of Tiru Vi Ka who at a personal level wielded a lot of influence in political circles, the matter was settled.⁶⁸

This incident reveals that Maraimalai Atikal's pure-Tamil movement is representative of the early phase of non-Brahmin Tamilian revival and that the political development of later times (around 1930) began to reveal the class contradictions within the non-Brahmin movement. Even though the Dravida Kazhakam was a transmutation of the Justice party, the leadership of the DK and the pattern of struggle advocated by them were very different. The Justice Party was usually referred to as the Zamindar's party.⁶⁹ DK was quasi-proletarian in character. The rise of DK also marks the end of the supremacy of Vellala leadership of the non-Brahmin movement. EVR was a Naicker. Maraimalai Atikal's Tanittamil movement was indivisibly bound up with aristocratic ideals. Thus the conflict was inevitable.

This conflict lessened the political importance of the Tanittamil Iyakkam in later times. In fact we do not have any evidence to relate Maraimalai Atikal with the rise of the DMK.

But there was one exception, and that was the anti-Hindi movement in Madras, which led to uprisings in 1937 and 1948. In 1937 when Rajaji tried to introduce Hindi as a compulsory subject in grades 5, 6, 7, there arose a big Anti-Hindi movement in which all the anti-Brahmin forces joined together. Maraimalai Atikal was in the forefront of the movement. In 1937, and more importantly in 1948 when after independence efforts were taken to make Hindi the official language, Maraimalai Atikal was given a place of prominence because he had come to symbolise the independence of the Tamil language.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The Tanittamil Iyakkam of Maraimalai Atikal was the cultural expression of a political movement. Such movements for purity of language form a part of the nationalist struggle and the conflicts that surround it.⁷¹ This is inescapable for "language is the most expressive vehicle for a society, beliefs, values and sentiments and (is) a means of self-recognition."⁷²

The sociological significance of the Tanittamil movement is that it spoke on behalf of a group of people who, inspite of their desire to control and direct matters politically, were denied that social and political mobility.⁷³ The Tanittamil movement also helped to build many "myths" about the Tamil language; its independence, its sweetness, its grammatical finesse, and so on.⁷⁴

In terms of Tamil language and literature one could say that it stemmed the excessive use of loan words in Tamil, and that it inspired all practitioners of Tamil writings and oratory to tap the resources of the language more deeply, to coin new expressions for ideas which have not been expressed in Tamil.

- ¹ *Velalar Nakarikam* (Tamil) English preface to the second Edition—Kazhakam, 1963, p 10. Also see *Cintanaikkatturaikal* (7). English preface to the second edition—Kazhakam, 1961, p 23.
- ² *Pulavar Aracu, Maraimalai Atikal Kazhakam*, 1951, pp 77-8. *Marai Tirunavukkaracu Maraimalai Atikal Varalaru Kazhakam*, 1959, pp 297. Neelambikai, *Tanittamilkkatturaikal Pallavaram*, 1925, preface.
- ³ The songs written (or sung) by Ramalinke swamikal of Vatalur are generally referred to as *Arutpa* (songs inspired by the Grace of God).
- ⁴ *Maraimalai Atikal, Cintanaikkatturaikal*, pp 23-4.
- ⁵ *ibid.*, pp 34-5.
- ⁶ Neelambikai, *op.cit.*, p 4.
- ⁷ *ibid.*, pp 43-56.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, pp 67-72.
- ⁹ *Maraimalai Atikal, Velalar Nakarikam*, p 118 ff.
- ¹⁰ Beteille, *Castes : Old and New*, Asia Publishing House, London, p 159.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*, p 163.
- ¹² *ibid.*, p 159.
- ¹³ Eugene Irshick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, University of California Press, 1969, pp 6-7.
- ¹⁴ Sundaralingam, *Politics and Change in the Madras Presidency 1884-1894*, Thesis submitted to the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, pp 304-359.
- ¹⁵ *ibid.*, cf Irshick, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*, p 360.
- ¹⁷ R Hardgrave, *The Dravidian Movement*, Bombay, 1966.
- ¹⁸ For a detailed analysis of the contribution made by these two missionaries, see R P Sethuppillai *Kaltuvai Aiyer Canttiram*, Tirunelveli, 1936 and Mylai. Ceeni. Venkatacamy *Krittavamum Tamilum*, 1955.
- ¹⁹ R Caldwell *A comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or S I Family of languages*, Madras, 1961, p 4.
- ²⁰ *ibid.*, p 81, emphasis by the author of this article.
- ²¹ For reasons for the Christian appreciation of Thiruvacakam see K Sivathamby *Thiruvacakam Kattum Manivacakar*. Hindu Dharma Peradineya 1966-7.
- ²² Pope, *Tiruvacakam (Tr)*, Oxford, 1900 (reprinted) p IXXIV.
- ²³ See S D Sargunar's English Foreward to Mylai Ceeni Venkatacamy *Krittuvamum Tamilum*—Kazhakam 1955.
- ²⁴ Irshick, *op.cit.* p 280.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, p 295.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, p 283.
- ²⁷ V Kanakasabhai, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*, Second edition Kazhakam, 1956, p 3.
- ²⁸ *ibid.*, p 2.
- ²⁹ M Srinivasa Aiyangar *Tamil Studies*, Madras, 1914, p 46.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, p 3.
- ³¹ See note 22.
- ³² I M P Mahadevan on *Saiva Siddhanta in History of Eastern and Western Philosophy* S Radhakrishnan, ed; Vol I, London, 1952, pp 369-380.
- ³³ J M Nallaswami Pillai, *Sivagnana Siddhiyar (Tr)*, Madras, 1913.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*, pp vii, viii.
- ³⁵ Arasu *op. cit.*, pp 21-2.
- ³⁶ *Tirunavukkarasu op cit.*, pp 9-10.
- ³⁷ Irshick, *op. cit.*, pp 47-8.
- ³⁸ *Tirunavukkarasu, op. cit.*

- 41 M P Sivagnanam, *Vitutalaipporil Tamil Valaranta Varalaru*, Madras, 1970. pp 39-46.
- 42 *Tirunavukkarasu*, *op. cit.*, p 176.
- 43 Sivagnanam, *op. cit.*, p 83-7.
- 44 *ibid.*, p 85.
- 45 *ibid.*, pp 91-2.
- 46 *ibid.*, p 93.
- 47 Tiru Vi Ka. *Valkkaikkurippukal*, Part I Kazhakam, Madras 1969, pp 261-2.
- 48 *ibid.*, pp 268-9.
- 49 *ibid.*, pp 102, 161, 163, 169.
- 50 *Tirunavukkarasu*, *op. cit.*, pp 239-30, 629-30.
- 51 see Tiru Vi Ka's foreword to *Maraimalai Atikal Tamilin Taniccirappu*, Madras, 1959.
- 52 Sivagnanam *op. cit.*, pp 136-7.
- 53 *ibid.*, p 117.
- 54 *Tirunavukkarasu*, *op. cit.*, p 765.
- 55 Beteille, *op. cit.*, p 167.
- 56 *Tirunavukkarasu*, pp 765.
- 57 Maraimalai Atikal, *Tamilar Matham*, Kazhakam, 1941-48, p 48.
- 58 Maraimalai Atikal, *Cintanaikkatturaikal* 2nd edition, 1925, p 20.
- 59 Atikal, *Palan Tamilkkolkaiye Gaiva Camayam*, Kazhakam, 1958, pp 62, 88, 118.
- 60 Atikal, *Vellar Nakarikam*, p 116.
- 61 *Tirunavukkarasu*, p 762.
- 62 *ibid.*, pp 522 and 525.
- 63 Swadesamitran, Annual Supplement, 1917, p 34.
- 64 *Mahakavi Parliyar Katturaikal*, see section on *Camukam*, p 70, Madras. 1962.
- 65 *Tirunavukkarasu*, *op. cit.*, p 782, 7
- 66 V Anaimuthu Periyar *Cintanaikal Patippaciriyar Munnurai*, Trichy, 1974.
- 67 *Tirunavukkarasu*, p 621.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p 625.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p 629.
- 70 K Sivathamby "Politicians as Players", *The Drama Review*, New York University, Vol 15 No 5, 1971.
- 71 *Tirunavukkarasu*, *op. cit.*, p 809 ff.
- 72 Roff William, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Yale University Press, 1967, pp 46-7.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p 46.
- 74 Inglehert and Woodward, "Language Conflicts and Political Community" in *Language and Social Context*, Pier Paolo Gigliote, (Ed.) Penguin, 1972, pp 358-376.
- 75 Charles A. Ferguson "Myths about Arabic" in *Headings in the Sociology of language*, Joshua A Fishman, Mouton 1972, pp 375-381.

P IBRAHIM

The Development of Transport Facilities in Kerala: A Historical Review

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP between transportation facilities and economic growth appears to be complex. Economic growth may require transportation facilities as a pre-condition; the latter may not be, however, a sufficient condition for economic growth.¹ Construction of roads, opening up of waterways and introduction of railways, need not, by themselves, generate the process of economic change. Nor does it seem to be plausible to hypothesise that transportation facilities would develop only in response to economic growth. In this paper we shall attempt to examine the nature of the interrelationship between the two variables as revealed by the experience in the three regions of Kerala—namely Malabar, Cochin and Travancore—during the period from the second half of the 19th century till the attainment of Independence in 1947.

The two major questions examined are (1) What are the factors that contributed to the development of the transport system in its present form in Kerala, and (2) What factors accounted for the differences in the structure, level and rate of development of transport, as between the three erstwhile regions of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore?

Evolution of Transport

The development of modern transport in Kerala appears to have begun only by the latter half of the 19th century. The earlier efforts,

confined chiefly to Malabar, consisted of the construction of a few land routes during 1776-1793 and canals during 1820-1860. The land routes were opened during the period of the Mysore Sultanate² and the canals during the early decades of British rule, with a view to ensuring mobility of military personnel necessary to quell riots and uprisings of the local population against alien rule.

- Construction of roads suitable for wheeled traffic was the harbinger of the modern era of transport development everywhere in the world. In Kerala such land routes were practically non-existent till the latter half of the 19th century. The principal reasons for the absence of such roads possibly were the availability of cheap waterways adequate to meet the limited requirements of trade and commerce in the numerous self-sufficient and economically isolated petty principalities; the unfavourable geographic and climatic conditions which made road construction difficult and costly given the techniques at that time and the geographical isolation which insulated the region throughout the major part of its history from foreign aggression.³ Development of transport on a massive scale began in the region from the mid-19th century. This was not confined to any one mode of transport, even though the construction of railroads was first limited to Malabar and that of canals and roads, by and large, to Travancore and Cochin.

Developments in Malabar

The tardy development of transport in Malabar, is a reflection of the peculiar socio-political and economic conditions that prevailed in that region under British rule. It is well known that during the 19th century, the main object of British rule in Malabar was to keep the agricultural economy under duress—by suppressing the 'outrageous' tenants and safeguarding the interests of the propertied classes—for ensuring a regular and growing flow of land revenue. Consequently the attention paid by the administrators towards transport development appears to have generally followed the sequence of agrarian uprisings in the region. However, the need to promote foreign trade also weighed to some extent with the British in the promotion of transportation facilities in the Malabar region.

The history of continuous native uprisings in Malabar which spanned over a century from 1800 necessitated frequent movements of troops from one end of the district to the other. Already at the beginning of the 19th century, there existed in Malabar a few canals constructed for facilitating movement of Mysorean troops into the region.⁴ During the early decades of British rule, a number of canals were designed, with a view to facilitating the maintenance of law and order. However, since the law and order situation in the territory during the period from the fall of Pazhassy Raja to the first Moplah uprising (1805—1838) was quite under control, no serious effort seems to have been made by the

British to construct the canals so designed. After 1820, we find a sudden upsurge in canal construction activities. The construction of important canals like Payyoli, Conolly, Ponnani and Badagara during the two decades between 1840 and 1860, coincided with the first phase of tenant uprisings in Malabar. When the British felt that the uprisings had died down, consequent on the imposition of heavy fines and other repressive measures, they slowed down the pace of canal construction activities.

The development of road transport in Malabar also seems to have been influenced by military and law and order considerations to a large extent. For instance the gun roads built by Tippu in the late 18th century and by the British in the first and the fourth decades of the 19th century—during the Pazhassy rebellion and the Moplah riots—largely exhaust the list of important roads that existed in Malabar as late as the 1880s.⁶ Available evidence indicates that the British neglected, by and large, even the maintenance of these roads, not to speak of the construction of new ones. Innes who was the collector of Malabar in the twenties of the present century, points out the colossal indifference of the early British authorities towards the maintenance of roads.⁶ According to him, for more than two decades after the suppression of the Pazhassy rebellion a period of long stagnation ensued, all interests in communication being in “a state of suspended animation”. The roads steadily deteriorated, so much so that there existed only two carriage roads in Malabar till 1840. In 1832 the government even formally renounced all attempts to maintain them in good order. The annual allotment towards roads was as low as Rs 30,000 a year. But suprisingly enough, in the twenty five years from 1826 to 1850, even the allotted amount was not spent; the average expenditure did not exceed Rs 1,800 a year.⁷ But the government was forced to revoke its stand due to the outbreak of the Moplah revolt and there ensued a period of hectic road construction activity. Roads constructed in 1846 alone measured 146 miles.⁸ This assessment of Innes throws light on the attitude of the British authorities towards the construction and maintenance of means of transport in general, and roads in particular. The British authorities seem to have followed this broad policy of neglect in the subsequent period also, as is revealed by a decline in the absolute figure of road mileage since 1896.⁹ It may be noted in this connection that the scare of the Moplah revolt had practically vanished by the end of the 19th century, though it reemerged on a much bigger scale within another two decades.

‘Benefits’ of Railroad Construction

The British introduced railways into India with two main purposes in view: (I) troop movements and (II) the promotion of foreign trade¹⁰. The reasons for introducing railways into Malabar were not different either. Within a few years after the introduction of railways, a position was reached which enabled the British authorities to move

troops from the headquarters of the Presidency at Madras to various trouble spots in Malabar. However, the possibilities of exploiting the rich commercial wealth of the district, must have acted as an additional incentive for the development of the railways. The spices and timber of Malabar had lured the foreigners to its coast from time immemorial. Thus at the time when the British introduced railways in India mainly for connecting India's hinterlands with the ports, Malabar also received a small share. The first railway line was laid between Tirur and Beypore in 1861. The British might have terminated the line at Beypore with the hope that this port town would regain its ancient importance as a major centre of foreign trade. The difficulty of extending the line beyond Beypore through difficult terrain might have been another reason for terminating the line at Beypore¹¹. According to Logan this decision had been a folly on the part of the British¹². When the line was later extended to Calicut (in 1888) goods and passenger traffic, as well as foreign trade from Malabar increased substantially¹³. The bulk of railway development in Malabar during the 19th century ended by 1888, when the total railway length in that area stood at 99 miles.

Developments in Cochin

By the beginning of the 19th century, the British Cochin had developed into a major port on the West Coast of Kerala. The external trade handled at Cochin, phenomenally increased by the middle of the century for several reasons. The Victorian prosperity in Europe coupled with the introduction of steamships in the 1850's multiplied the trade between the East and West several fold. Further, a major portion of the trade of the neighbouring Travancore came to be handled at Cochin, to escape the penal duties which Travancore otherwise had to pay according to the Interportal Convention then in vogue. These conditions naturally increased the trade of the State of Cochin considerably. Innovations in agriculture in the form of extension of irrigation facilities and dissemination of better seeds among farmers brought large tracts of barren land under cultivation and boosted internal production, especially during the regimes of Diwan Venkata Subayya (1835-1840) and Diwan Sankara Warriar (1840-56). Hospitals and schools which started sprouting in Cochin since 1820, began to increase in number especially after 1840¹⁴. In 1854 slavery was abolished adding to the mobility of labour. These developments naturally demanded more transportation and communication facilities.

Since Cochin was more favourably endowed with natural waterways than any other region in Kerala, the authorities realised the advantages of constructing a few artificial canals first as a prelude to the extension of land transport. All the important canals now existing in Cochin were constructed during 1840-1880¹⁵. This period coincided with the regimes of Sankara Warriar and Shankunni Menon. The construc-

tion of the Thevarakundalur Canal which provided easy accessibility to Thripunithura, Aranattukara canal which facilitated the creation of a boat service between Trichur and South Cochin and the deepening of Elathuruthy Canal were the major projects undertaken in Cochin during this period.

Wheeled traffic was established between Coimbatore and Cochin for the first time in 1844.¹⁶ When with the introduction of Railways into Malabar direct contact was made possible between Shornur and Madras, the traffic between Shornur and the regions of Cochin State enormously increased, necessitating the construction of the Shornur bridge. This bridge was completed in 1871 at a cost of Rs 3 lakhs. This road system later turned out to be Cochin's main artery of Traffic on land with Malabar and Madras. In 1880 there were about 400 miles of roads in Cochin which spread by another 50 miles within two decades. Though Cochin stood behind Malabar in 1880 in terms of road density, within a decade or so it overtook Malabar.

The Travancore Experience

It was in Travancore that the most extensive developments of the transport system took place in this period. By the middle of the century British capital had entered the Travancore economy on a big scale with a view to opening up plantations in the High Ranges. The magnitude of the flow of British capital can easily be surmised from the fact that an extensive area of 85,000 acres of virtually virgin lands in Travancore were sold to a few British planters in the early eighties.¹⁷ The demand for labour for work on the High Ranges necessitated frequent movements of men and materials between the plains and the High Ranges of the State on the one hand, and between the neighbouring Tamil districts and the High Ranges of Travancore on the other. The abolition of predial slavery in 1855 made possible this increased mobility of labour. The onset of Famine in 1860 and again in 1870, necessitating imports of rice in large quantities, and the enormous increase in the internal and external trade of the State following relaxation of trade restrictions in the form of trade monopolies on pepper and tobacco and the Interportal convention¹⁸ lead to the creation of a Public Works Department. Set up in 1860 under the initiative of the Diwan T Madhava Rao, it was mainly meant to prepare and execute an ambitious programme of road construction aimed largely at the exploitation of the trade and agricultural potential of the State. As a first step, the Main Southern Road from Trivandrum to Aramboly, 52 miles in length was repaired. This was the main artery of traffic and trade between Travancore and the Tamil region in the south. Considerable progress was made within the next two decades in road construction. Most of the roads built during the three decades following 1860, were arterial routes, connecting the major trading centres and population

pockets. Particular mention, in this connection, should be made of the Main Central Road (156 miles) completed in 1878, which went through the most fertile regions in the interior, connecting the important towns from Trivandrum upto the northern frontier of the State. Simultaneously with the construction of the M. C. Road short feeder roads to the coast and to the High Ranges were also laid, all of which gave a great fillip to trade and agriculture. Most of the roads constructed in the latter half of the 19th century were so designed as to render the communication between the inland towns and waterways quite easy. After 1880 when the area under plantations increased further and factories—mainly tea factories—mushroomed, an exodus to the High Ranges occurred in the literal sense¹⁹ which necessitated the construction of a few more roads from the base of the Ghats down to the coast. The growth of road mileage in Travancore was so rapid that from a mere 52 miles in 1862 it rose suddenly to 900 miles in 1880 and further to 3000 by 1900. Even before the turn of the present century Travancore had stolen a march over Malabar and Cochin in road density.

Besides the reasons stated above, Travancore had some additional compulsions also to go in for the extension of water transport facilities. Following the growth of Madras and Tuticorin ports on the east and Cochin on the west, Travancore lost a major share of her foreign trade. "Travancore, thus, ceased to be the common carriers for South India" which title she had enjoyed for a few centuries in the past.²⁰ The Inter-portal Act which imposed heavy duties on the export of goods from Travancore to British Ports not only diverted a large part of the trade of Travancore to Cochin but also raised the transportation cost considerably. These conditions forced Travancore to design a system of transport which would carry her rich commercial crops to the nearest harbours in the cheapest manner possible. Water transport has always been the cheapest mode of transport. In the absence of motor vehicles, land travel in those days was slow and tedious; the authorities found it necessary to provide uninterrupted water transportation facilities along the coast in response to the increasing demand for passenger traffic.

The first canal opened in Travancore was the one from Channam-kara at the southern tip of Anjengo lake upon Vallakadavu, which stretched upto the Varkala Cliff. The second one was the Paravur canal connecting the backwaters of Edava and Paravur. The Quilon Canal connecting the Paravur and Ashtamudi lakes, the Chavara Canal connecting Ashtamudi and Panmana and the Commercial Canal connecting Alleppey with the backwaters came in quick succession. The Anantha Marthanda Canal facilitated water traffic from Trivandrum to the Cape. The Varkala Berrior Canal was the most ambitious project undertaken during this period. With its completion in 1880 a continuous and uninterrupted waterway from Trivandrum to Beypore in Malabar, a distance of 228 miles, was made possible.²¹

Differences Between Regions

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the rapid developments in transport that took place in Kerala in the last half of the 19th century were the result of a host of factors, economic, social and political.²² The most important single factor which accounted for a near transport revolution during this period seems to have been the unprecedented increase in trade, both external and internal. In Malabar however, the transport system owed its earlier development to extraneous and extra-economic factors. Since, in Malabar, the peculiar political conditions necessitated frequent movements of troops, the British thought it necessary to construct railways connecting that region with the head quarters of the presidency while adopting a policy of negligence with regard to road construction and maintenance. On the other hand the Travancore and the Cochin governments concentrated their attention largely on the extension of road and water transport facilities. The fact that Cochin and Travancore were native States enjoying relative political stability seems to account for the delay in the introduction of railways into these two regions, as also the profitability and efficiency of the alternative systems of transportation like roads and water ways.

TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT DURING THE 20th CENTURY

During the first half of the 20th century the trends in transport development appear to have been similar to that in the earlier period with, Malabar lagging behind the other two regions. The main aspects of change in the level and nature of the transport system in the three regions for the period 1900—1947 is traced below.

In Malabar, road density remained more or less unchanged throughout the first three decades of the present century, while rail density recorded an increase due to the extension of the Southern Railway from Calicut to Mangalore in 1904 and the construction of the Nilambur-Shornur railway in 1927 and the Palghat — Podanur Line in 1931 (See Table I). As for Cochin, during the entire period (1900-1947) road density was slowly but steadily increasing. Further, with the completion of the Shornur-Ernakulam line, the first railway in Cochin, in 1902, rail density in that state stood at 3.32 miles. Further additions were made only in the post depression period, consisting mainly of a small extension of the railway line from Ernakulam to Cochin Harbour.

Travancore retained its lead in transport development in the present century also. By the end of 1931 road density in Travancore nearly doubled. The Quilon-Tinnevely line, the first railway to Travancore, came in 1904, raising the average rail density of the region to 0.90 mile. Further additions to railway mileage were made only in the post-World War I period, with the opening of the Quilon-Trivandrum line in 1918 and its further extension to Thampanur eight years later. During the

TABLE I

ROAD AND RAIL DENSITY IN TRAVANCORE-COCHIN AND MALABAR (IN MILES PER 100 SQUARE MILES OF AREA)

Year	Travancore		Cochin		Malabar	
	Road	Rail	Road	Rail	Road	Rail
1900-01	30.5	—	32.0	—	30.0	1.70
1905-06	43.0	0.90	32.0	3.32	31.0	2.26
1910-11	44.0	0.90	34.0	3.32	32.0	2.26
1915-16	45.0	0.90	35.0	3.32	31.0	2.26
1920-21	51.0	1.52	36.0	3.32	31.0	2.26
1925-26	54.0	1.52	36.0	3.32	31.0	2.26
1930-31	57.4	1.54	39.0	3.32	32.0	3.07
1933-36	60.0	1.54	39.0	3.82	NA	3.45
1940-41	62.4	1.54	40.0	3.82	NA	3.45
1945-46	62.5	1.54	43.0	3.82	NA	3.45

Figures of road density relating to Malabar for the years 1900-01, 1905-06 and 1910-1911 actually relate to 1901-02, 1906-07 and 1911-12 respectively.

SOURCE: (1) Malabar District Gazetteers, Statistical appendix for Malabar District, K N Krishnaswamy Ayyar, in Rutherford (ed).

(2) Administration Reports of Travancore for different years from 1900-01 to 1946-47.

(3) Administration Reports of Cochin for the relevant years

(4) District Gazetteers-Trivandrum, Ernakulam, Quilon and Kozhikode.

(5) Innes, "Malabar" in FB Evans (ed).

interregnum between the World War and the Great Depression, Travancore made rapid strides in motor transport as well. The first motor vehicle was registered in the state in the year 1912, but automobiles became a more common mode of transport only after World War I.²⁸ However, due to the adverse circumstances following the global depression, road and rail density registered only a marginal increase subsequently. This was accompanied by a steep decline in the number of automobiles in use,²⁴ since in a number of routes there existed more buses than what the traffic actually warranted.²⁵ Partly to restore order and partly due to other economic and political considerations the Government of Travancore set up the Transport Department in 1937 and endeavoured to bring important routes under Government control starting with the motor traffic between Trivandrum, Colachel and Cape Comorin in 1937.²⁶ This brought down the cost of transportation significantly.

Composite Index

So far we have examined transport development in the three regions individually in terms of rail and road densities. It is evident from Table I that the relative position of Malabar in terms of road density is below that of Travancore and Cochin. However, her posi-

tion in terms of rail density is slightly better than that of the other two regions. Thus the relative importance of different modes of transport varies from region to region. This has necessitated the construction of a yardstick of overall transport development. The weights assigned are based on the relative share of aggregate expenditure on different modes of transport by the transport users in Kerala in the year 1965. The weights thus assigned to rail and roadways are 0.73 and 0.21 respectively.⁵⁷ The indices are presented in table II.

TABLE 2
COMPOSITE INDEX OF TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN MALABAR
COCHIN AND TRAVANCORE

	<i>Malabar</i>	<i>Cochin</i>	<i>Travancore</i>	<i>Col 2 ÷ Col 4</i>	<i>Col 3 ÷ Col 4</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>
1900-01	22.12 (100)	24.09 (100.0)	27.35 (100.0)	0.808	0.880
1905-06	22.86 (103)	24.80 (103.0)	31.11 (113.7)	0.735	0.797
1910-11	23.58 (106.6)	25.53 (106.0)	31.83 (116.4)	0.741	0.802
1915-16	NA	27.69 (114.8)	32.55 (119.0)	NA	0.851
1925-26	23.03 (104.1)	28.41 (117.9)	51.62 (143.2)	0.553	0.683
1930-31	23.83 (107.7)	28.41 (117.9)	39.16 (152.2)	0.608	0.725
1935-36	NA	29.25 (121.4)	43.81 (160.2)	NA	0.725
1940-41	NA	31.41 (127.4)	45.29 (165.5)	NA	0.694
1945-46	NA	32.13 (133.4)	45.65 (166.9)	NA	0.704
1946-47	NA	32.13 (133.4)	45.65 (166.9)	NA	0.704

(Figures in brackets indicate the index values)

The Table reveals that Travancore has recorded considerable progress during the first three decades of the present century, registering an increase of 52 points over the base year. A further decomposition shows that the major portion of the development took place during the post-World War I period indicated by an increase in the index by 33 points during 1915-1930. The corresponding figure for the earlier period (1900-1915) is as low as 19. Thus, much of the development during the first half of the 20th century occurred in the interregnum between World War I and the Great Depression. By contrast, Malabar exhibits no perceptible improvement, the increase being only about 8 points over a period of thirty years. Viewed as a whole we find that the relative position of Malabar has worsened drastically. As for Cochin, the index increased by 18 points from 100 in 1911 to 118 points in 1930-31. Though Cochin lags behind Travancore, she compares more favourably with Malabar. As the figures in columns 4 and 5 clearly show the interregional differences in transport development have increased over time.

Explaining Differential Performance

In what follows an attempt is made to offer some explanation for the differential performance in transport development in the three regions

in terms of the rates of growth of a few other social and economic indicators. Population growth is one such important indicator.²⁸ It is seen from Table 3 that since 1901, the population of Travancore and Cochin has been growing at a more rapid rate than in Malabar. Taking the first three decades of the present century, we find that population growth in Travancore has been the highest. During 1921-1931, population growth in the three regions was higher than during 1911-1921 and 1931-41. Significant improvements in transportation facilities are also observed during this decade.

TABLE III
INTERCENSAL RATES OF POPULATION INCREASES IN TRAVANCORE,
COCHIN AND MALABAR

Period	Travancore	% rates of Increase Cochin	Malabar
1900-1911	16.2	13.1	7.8
1911-1921	16.8	6.6	3.2
1921-1931	27.2	28.2	14.1

SOURCE: P G K Panickar et al, *Population Growth and Agricultural Development, A case study of Kerala*, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1977, p 2.

Secondly, Urbanisation which, itself is a by-product of population growth, industrialisation and commercialism is a strong factor influencing the expansion of transportation facilities. Table 4 illustrates the degrees of urbanisation as measured by the percentages of urban population to the total population in the three regions. During the initial years of this century, though Travancore was behind Malabar in the degree of urbanisation, she managed to overtake Malabar in this respect since 1921. What is more, Travancore showed a steady upward trend in urbanisation while Malabar more or less stagnated. In Cochin not only was the degree of urbanisation higher than in Travancore in 1901 itself, but it has remained so throughout the period under review. The steep rise in urbanisation observed since 1921, is in tune with the impressive growth in transport also. We may, however, add that it would be unrealistic to consider any one of these variables as the independent and the other as the dependent since the interaction between the two may be mutual.

TABLE IV
PERCENTAGE OF URBAN POPULATION TO THE TOTAL
POPULATION IN THE THREE REGIONS

	Travancore	Cochin	Malabar
1901	6.2	10.8	7.8
1911	6.2	12.0	8.0
1921	10.0	13.0	7.6
1931	10.8	17.1	7.7
1941	11.4	18.2	NA

SOURCE: Census of India 1931 Vol. XXI Cochin Part I report, P. 22.

Transport development in Kerala owes very much to the growth and development of agriculture in the Travancore and Cochin areas. The development of tea, coffee and rubber plantations under the initiative of the British since the latter half of the 19th century increased the variety of the cropping pattern and expanded the area under non-food crops enormously. Rapid rates of growth in the production of exportable commercial crops lead to the development of internal transportation facilities essential for linking the trading centres of the region. Owing to the unprecedented growth of employment and income there arose a growing demand, far in excess of domestic supplies, for consumer goods, mainly rice. This led to a sharply rising trend in the imports of foodgrains. The imported goods had to be distributed throughout the entire geographical area of the State. This necessitated the construction of a vast network of means of transport, especially roads. Such economic forces seem to have moulded and modelled the transport system of Travancore. In the case of Malabar, where a more restrictive trade policy existed compared to Travancore, the degree of commercialisation of agriculture was less as is indicated by the fact that a smaller proportion of gross cultivated area was under non-food crops; the figure for Malabar and Travancore being 28.9 percent and 30.8 percent respectively, during 1940-45. Even with regard to the overall development of agriculture Malabar lagged behind Travancore. This is revealed by the proportion of gross area cultivated to the total geographical area, which was 52.21 percent for Travancore and only 47.87 percent for Malabar during 1940-45.

As for industrial development Innes rounds off his discussion on industries in Malabar in 1930 by noting that "manufacture are still scanty and one must almost write even today as the Joint Commissioner did in 1793 about its manufactures that unless vegetable and coir fall under that denomination there are hardly any other."²⁹ In Travancore on the other hand, the number of factories are found to have increased from 6 in 1900-01 to 68 in 1910-11 and further to 159 by 1931. In Cochin also the growth in the number of factories was fairly rapid, their number increasing from 50 in 1920-21 to 98 in 1930-31.³⁰

Finally, even with regard to the growth in the volume of trade Malabar's performance did not compare with that of Travancore and Cochin. As we have observed in the first section, the unprecedented increase in trade in Travancore during the first half of the 19th century was the most important single factor responsible for the sudden upsurge in transport. Only fragmentary evidence is available about the conditions of trade in Malabar. For the initial years of this century the only available data for Malabar are the average trade statistics for the years 1899-1903, which comes to about 753 lakhs. However time series data on exports from and imports to Malabar are available for the period 1921-22 to 1930-31. Taking the five-year averages for the periods 1899-

- by the Superintendent, Government Press, Madras, 1951, p 238.
- ⁸ "Road was a response to the Soldier rather than the merchant. The cost and care in planning, in making and maintaining a well built road of Roman type in Europe or Mauryan type in India would be prohibitive to the goods carriage available in those days where only the trader and industrialist wanted such roads. The military roads may have indeed afterwards served the needs of commerce more in proportion but that was not their intention. And even today barring the exceptional conditions of U K and USA the principal land routes worked by the rail roads of the world are at least as much the creation of military requirements as of mercantile demands and military requirement must be the most important motive spring in road building at any time in human history", K T Shah, *Tariff, Trade and Transport in India*, 1923, p 37.
- ⁴ The first artificial canal in Kerala was built in 1776 by Ali Raja of Cannanore by connecting the peruvamba and koppam rivers of North Malabar. This was to facilitate the troop movements of Hyder Ali.
- ⁵ William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I, Superintendent Govt Press, Madras, 1931, p 61.
- ⁶ C A Innes, *Malabar*, *op cit.* p 268.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, p 268
- ⁸ *Ibid*, p 268

ROAD LENGTH IN MALABAR

	<i>Metalled</i>	<i>Unmetalled</i>	<i>Total</i>
⁹ 1891-92	1588	46	1634
1896-97	2028	2	2030
1901-02	1695	52	1747
1906-07	1714	63	1777
1911-12	1737	65	1802
1925-26	1483	307	1790
1930-31	1369	474	1843

SOURCE: Krishnaswamy Ayyar and T G Rutherford (ed) Madras District Gazatteers, Malabar District Vol. II statistical Appendix, Superintendent of Government Press, Madras 1933.

- ¹⁰ Railways were introduced in India in the wake of the famous Minute of Dalhousie which urged in the first instance, the creation of a system of trunk lines connecting the interior of each presidency with its principal port and connecting the different presidencies with one another. The objectives behind the introduction of railways are evident from the following statement of the British authorities. The Governor General Lord Hardinge wrote in support of railway "thus in this country..... the facility for rapid concentration of infantry and artillery and stores may be the cheap prevention of insurrection and speedy termination of war for the safety of the empire" quoted in M N Das *Studies in Economic and Social Development* 1951, p 36.

Dalhousie wrote in 1853 "the commercial and social advantages which India would derive from their establishment are beyond present calculations. Great tracts are teeming into produce what they cannot dispose of... Every increase of facilities for trade has been attended..... with an increased demand for articles of European produce in the most distant parts of India..... and England was crying aloud for raw materials like cotton". N B Mehta Quoted in *Indian Railways Rates and Regulation*, 1927, p 13.

- ¹¹ Innes points out that beyond Kadalundi (Beypore), the construction of railway lines was difficult and expensive because rivers were encountered every few miles and the Swamps at Elathur, Tellichery, and Azhikkal caused much delay. C A Innes, *op cit.*, p 271.

- ¹² Logan writes "Before the extension of the line to Calicut it was a mistake for the railway to stop at Beypore, which was only an insignificant fishing village and the line should have been brought into Calicut, the head quarters of the district, only 7 miles distant from the terminus. The traffic on the line showed no tendency to expand, nor was it likely to be the case till a more suitable station was obtained." William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol I Superintendent Govt Press, Madras, 1906, p 67.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p 67
- ¹⁴ A Sreedhara Menon, *History of Kerala* (Malayalam) 1973, National Book Stall, pp 425-426.
- ¹⁵ C Achutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, The Superintendent Government Press, Ernakulam, 1911, p 162.
- ¹⁶ C Achutha Menon, author of the Cochin Manual writes in this connection "when one fine morning 12 bullock carts laden with goods from Coimbatore arrived at Trichur, where most people had not seen such a conveyance before, there was by all accounts more excitement in the place than when the railway train first passed through it 58 years later". *Cochin State Manual*, *op cit.*, p 165.
- ¹⁷ T K Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual* Vol. III, The Superintendent of Government Press, Trivandrum, 1940, p 18.
- ¹⁸ The Value of external trade more than doubled from Rs. 25 lakhs in 1854-55 to 51 lakhs in 1861-62 and further to Rs 118 lakhs by 1970-71. *Ibid.*, p 123.
- ¹⁹ The magnitude of migration to the High Ranges may be understood from the following table.

PERCENTAGE VARIATION OF POPULATION IN
TRAVANCORE, BY REGION

Division	1881-1891	1891-1901	1901-1911	1911-21	1921-31
S. Division	3.1	15.7	17.5	17.0	24.0
Central	9.7	12.8	15.3	17.0	25.2
Northern	5.0	17.6	14.9	15.5	29.9
High Range	136.2	46.8	85.7	42.0	84.9
Lowland	5.2	14.3	13.2	15.0	24.2
Midland	7.5	15.9	18.2	17.4	27.5
Highland	13.2	24.4	30.4	32.2	54.8

source: *Census of India 1931*, Travancore, Part I, p 20.

- ²⁰ Census of India, 1941, XXV, Travancore, Part I, pp 6-7.

²¹ T K Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual* *op.cit.*

- ²² For some of the developments of this period, see P R G Nair, "Education and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala (1793-1947)", *Social Scientist*, Number 44, pp 30-31.

²³ Upto 1921 there were only 152 motor vehicles in Travancore. Their number suddenly rose to 1667 by 1931. This phenomenal growth in automobiles had caused concern to the government. The depression committee traced all the ills of the state to the "indulgence in this exotic luxury".

- ²⁴ Number of automobiles dwindled from 1667 in 1931 to 1274 by 1937.

²⁵ T K V Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, *op cit.*, p 495.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p 496.

- ²⁷ According to the regional Transport Survey by the NCAER the expenditure by transport users in Kerala for the year 1965 is as follows.

Railway	: 21.4 percent
Road Transport	: 72.5 percent
Inland - Waterways	: 5.2 percent
Air-lines	: 0.9 percent

See *Regional Transport Survey of Kerala* NCAER, 1969, p 23.

- ²⁸ Reliable population estimates for the 19th century do not exist for the three regions. The census figures 1881 and 1891 are considered to be undependable. For instance, see the discussion on the population figures for these years for Travancore by Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual* Vol I, Supdt. Government Press, Trivandrum, 1906, pp 1-8.
- ²⁹ Innes, *op cit*, p 249.
- ³⁰ See Administration reports of Travancore for 1900-01, 1910-11 and 1930-31 and the Administration Reports of Cochin for 1920-21 and 1930-31.
- ³¹ This line, writes Innes, "runs through the Valluvanad and Erand Taluks, the main centres of Moplah rebellion of 1921 and is of considerable political and administrative value".- C A Innes, *Malabar, op cit.*, p. 272.

Report

Industrialisation in India

THE Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, held a seminar on "Industrialisation in India" on December 20-22, 1977. Since a competent summary of the proceedings is already available in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 21, 1978 (pp 93-96), this report has a slightly different objective. I shall try to focus on the more important points made in some of the papers putting them into a wider perspective, note the areas of agreement among the participants even when such a consensus was implicit in the discussion rather than clearly stated, and isolate a few questions which could have received further attention but were left unmentioned.

For the purpose of this report, I shall change the order of themes to facilitate a more lucid coverage. I shall begin with the debate on the "Structure of Industry", followed by 'Foreign Collaboration Agreements' and the paper by Amulya Kumar N Reddy, and wind up by taking a look at the features of "Industrial Stagnation" in India and the many explanations offered for it.

The Structure of Industry

Discussions on the structure of industry in India have centred round the "size" of enterprises in terms of output or employment, and the question of the optimum mix of large and small enterprises needed to achieve given policy objectives such as a target annual growth of output, the absorption of a given volume of the labour force or the generation of a certain quantum of foreign exchange through export. The most accepted way of characterising the structure of industry has been in terms of Monopoly Houses or large-scale firms, small-scale enterprises and a residual euphemistically dubbed the "informal" sector, consisting of a mixture of the putting-out system, and self-employed hawkers and producers of a large variety of low value goods and services.

There are several aspects to the discussion surrounding the "small and large-scale" enterprises question. One can begin by trying to get at a satisfactory definition of the small-scale sector itself. Sandesara,¹ points out that the term small industry or small-scale industry is used to

designate small-sized units, not small - sized industries. Thus the term "does not mean what it says". The word 'unit' may also refer to either a 'firm' which has one or more *plants* in operation or to the operational unit, that is, several criteria have been used to designate units as small or large such as horse-power, output, capital and workers; or any combination of these. Even Government reports and Commissions have used different names to refer to components of small industry. The Fiscal Commission (1949-50) discussed the problems of "cottage and small-scale industries", the International Planning Team (Ford Foundation) that of "traditional" village and small industries; while the Planning Commission refers to "village and small industries".³

In fact, the demarcating line between large and small "industry" has to necessarily be arbitrary, although different measures such as output, employment and so on can be emphasised depending on the context of the analysis. Support for Government aid to small industry has been recommended on many grounds, the most important of which are the need to encourage greater price competition, and to ensure higher labour absorption. There is an assumption that the growth of the small sector will somehow weaken the growth of monopoly houses, and lead to a fall in market prices both because of enhanced competition as well as greater efficiency of resource use. Nirmala Banerjee³ rightly notes that the basic assumption behind this view is that the ownership and management of capital in the two types of units is completely segregated. "Small-scale units are assumed to be owned and managed by small entrepreneurs who use their own capital or capital that they have borrowed from financial institutions for production of goods designed and run by themselves".⁴ Under these conditions, encouragement for the small sector really is another way of arguing for the spreading of profits over a wider number of recipients or a method of ensuring a more equitable distribution of income. The small versus large sector debate thus boils down to two types of questions: i) empirical-which examine the validity of the basic assumption of lower cost per unit, higher labour/capital ratio, price competition, and so on; and ii) theoretical-where one can analyse whether other more effective and, in terms of social cost, less expensive ways of obtaining a more equitable distribution of income can be devised. Since most of the attention in the seminar was focussed on the empirical validity of assumptions relating to the characteristics of small industry, it is worth recounting some of the observations made.

Relation Between Small and Big

Perhaps the most obvious as well as the most important feature of small industry in India is its dependence on the Monopoly houses and large public-sector enterprises. In the Leather industry, for example,⁵ a string of small producers are controlled by four firms including Batas, and Flex Company, which supply inputs, and market the output under

their own brand name. Banerjee quotes evidence to show that the recent rapid growth of the small sector is a manifestation of large capital decentralising rather than small entrepreneurs making gains. The good export performance of small industry also indicates their dependence on larger firms for contacts both with Government and customers abroad. S N Dalal from the Reserve Bank observed that often the big company directors are being wooed by small and medium ones to be members of their boards only to boost up their credit in the equity market. When small units are controlled directly by larger ones, aid to small units will not lead to greater price competition since prices would be still fixed by profit considerations in large and small firms taken together or by several large firms operating in collusion. Again the shoe industry of Calcutta is a good example of this.⁶

Both Papola and Banerjee take a critical look at the contention that the encouragement of the small and informal sectors would lead to greater employment. Papola,⁷ arguing in favour of large-scale industry emphasised the dualism within the industrial sector between a) the monopolistic large-scale units and the informal small units, and b) the vertically linked small units and other small units. Papola found that units in the small sector which are vertically linked with the units in the large sector, that is, those engaged in the production of intermediate products and accessories have grown much faster in the case of Bombay and Ahmedabad than the horizontally placed units which usually produce consumer goods and operate in competition with the large sector. The vertically integrated units were also responsive to technological changes taking place within the large sector. "It is this segment of the small sector" writes Papola, "which has contributed the major part of the increase in employment during the last ten years in the urban centres studied. There has also been found some movement of workers between the large and small establishments in this sector indicating that labour markets of the two sectors are not completely insulated from each other".⁸

Wage rates in small units were found to be significantly below that in factory units both because of lower productivity and the absence of unions. The very low wage rates combined with little security of employment can create a situation where several members of a family have to seek employment at less than the subsistence wage to maximise family money income. In this case, the lower living wage can actually bring about an increase in labour supply, and lower the wage rate even further.⁹ Like the case of employment of family labour in small farms in agriculture, in many of the informal sector units it was found that "surplus tends to be zero once the imputed wages for the self-employed and family labour are included in the cost. In many cases, workers are absorbed rather than productively employed in this sector as the earnings are lower than even the statutorily fixed minimum

wages".¹⁰ And unless, a surplus for expansion of employment and growth was available, employment would decline in the long run.

Papola was criticised for advocating industrialisation based on large-scale production. It was doubtful, it was claimed, whether "large-scale" industrialisation could even generate sufficient employment.¹¹ Often, even within capitalist enterprises short-run cost considerations were not the most important ones. Adoption of technology could be guided by the desire to obtain a better and firmer control of the labour process. Moreover, the amount of accumulation required for industrialisation through the large-scale sector could be just arithmetically impossible.¹² Bagchi stressed the fact that large-scale industrialisation in Western Countries had led to massive de-industrialisation in India. Many also cautioned, that when evaluating the "efficiency" of small units vis-a-vis large ones one should keep in mind the nature of the market in which each operated. When market imperfections are taken account of, the small sector may not appear inefficient.

Confused Debate

The debate on small industry in the Seminar, I believe, suffered from much confusion. The main reason for this lies in the failure to define the magnitude and extent of the small sector each participant had in view. Papola's and Banerjee's observations that the small sector can compete with the large sector by depressing wage rates, sometimes to below subsistence, is a very valid one and calls for a rethinking of a strategy of expansion of "employment" at *any* wage rate. The fact that even within the general category called "the small sector", there were many types of enterprises was lost sight of. Even if one agrees with Bagchi, that the path of industrialisation on the large-scale would need levels of accumulation which we could not hope to achieve in this country, one can still argue that encouragement of informal units *a la* Papola would not lead to any growth at all. The question really is how large is large; and how small is small? Growth of what Papola calls the informal sector may just be a manifestation of increasing poverty rather than growth of *industry*. This is especially likely to be true of units which lie in the services sector or those which operate a putting-out system. It is important to attempt to define at what stage a method of production becomes an enterprise or industry. Moreover, alternative strategies of encouraging cooperatives of small units organised under the aegis of the public sector could have been debated. Sandesara does mention the Handloom, Sericulture and Coir Boards but does not discuss the conditions of employment and wage rates in these industries compared with totally unregulated ones. Even when handicrafts are controlled by Government Boards, units within the industry can face many types of competition as was the case with Khadi and Village Industries which not only competed with the large-scale sector from outside, but with

one another, (for example, Khadi and Handloom units competing with Powerlooms, or "Cottage" industry with 'Small' industry).¹³

A second reason for the confusion in the discussion was the attention paid to problems of small industry in isolation from the rest of the economy. A debate on the encouragement of small industry is really one of industrial policy, and as such has to be part of a wider economic strategy. One can present a case in favour of small units using raw materials from agriculture, and located in the rural areas, organised on cooperative lines as a way of absorbing the growing labour force. Thus, encouragement to small units can be very selective and linked to planned growth in agriculture. One must guard against a criticism of parts of an economic strategy taken often out of context. Moreover, as was said at the Seminar, rationality *within* an economic system is not the same as the rationality *of* the economic system itself. Many advocates of egalitarianism who feel that the present economic system was itself irrational did not check the temptation to support the policy encouraging the small sector because of the emotive appeal of the "big is bad" slogan. The Seminar would certainly have gained from a consideration of alternative ways of promoting equality of income rather than the encouragement of the "small" sectors. One topic of discussion could be not just equality of incomes but also of consumption. As Bhabatosh Datta and others pointed out, choosing what to produce was the first problem. If one could decide what not to produce, many of the subsequent questions about the choice of appropriate technology and the scale of production could be considerably simplified. Even if a certain type of small industry was to be encouraged it is pertinent to ask whether subsidies on wages would not be a better form of promotion, than those on capital equipment and so on.

Growth of Monopoly Houses

From the small, we now turn to the big, and this brings us to Nirmal Chandra's papers on the growth of Monopoly Houses in India. Chandra asks two basic questions:

- i) How fast have Monopoly houses grown, both over time and also relative to the rest of the corporate sector?
- ii) Did the policy of industrial licencing favour the growth of monopoly houses?

In answer to the first, he concludes that the monopoly houses in India have not always had a faster growth than the rest of the corporate sector either privately or publicly owned.¹⁴ This is in contrast to his earlier finding that foreign companies in India have expanded at a higher pace compared to the rest of the corporate sector from the mid-sixties up to 1972-73. "In this era of highly restricted growth due to the limitations of the Indian home market an intense rivalry appears to exist between segments of monopoly and foreign capital".¹⁵ Moreover, the

dividing line between foreign and monopoly capital is not clear since "some of our monopoly houses are fully controlled from abroad, some have very strong links with foreign companies, whilst most monopoly groups have numerous collaboration agreements".¹⁶ In view of the finding that the market share of monopoly concerns has not risen continuously in India as in the advanced capitalist countries, Chandra cautions against applying Marx's laws of motion to the Indian case.

In answer to the second question, Chandra observes that gradually since 1966, and noticeably after 1972, the licencing policy has been virtually abandoned. Nevertheless, instead of encouraging deconcentration in the private corporate sector, these policy changes since 1966 have actively fostered the fast growth of monopolies up to 1971 and "helped them to stabilise their share of the private corporate sector from 1971 onwards".¹⁷

Chandra's conclusions were questioned at length by R. Sau. He felt that Chandra may not have done his sums right, since he had used current prices to deflate the assets of the Monopoly Houses. The central ingredient of the current inflation according to Sau was the sustained rise in foodgrain prices. To deflate the assets of the large houses by the general price index in order to correct for inflation does not make good sense according to Sau because of the heavy weightage which must be attributed to food prices. However, as Chandra pointed out in reply, although food prices have risen fast, after 1970 raw material and manufactured goods' prices have risen equally fast. Therefore, deflation of assets using the current price index may not be an invalid procedure. But apart from the arithmetic, Sau also noted that in both the stringent and liberal phases of licencing there had been growth and subsequent decline in the asset positions of the monopoly houses. Moreover, the size of assets is not always a good indication of the strength or economic position of monopolies. For example, if sick units are passed on to the Government, there would be a rise in the Government share in assets but this would not imply a weakening of the monopoly houses. There is also a distinction between "monopoly capital" and big business houses. Government investment may in fact strengthen rather than weaken monopoly houses, and too much reliance on mechanically calculated ratios may fail to explain the reality.¹⁸

Chandra's second paper on Industrial Licensing and Monopoly Houses was also criticised. Patnaik¹⁹ argued that in a study of merely twenty monopoly houses, the share in total assets of some may go up, others may come down, but the decline in the share of some houses does not imply de-concentration. This is specially relevant in the period between 1951-1971. He also noted that Chandra's conclusions were contrary to Hazari's earlier findings that licencing promotes concentration. I think, Patnaik, quite rightly pointed out that the whole issue cannot be answered in Chandra's framework, as licencing was essentially

a method of erecting barriers to entry into the market. A stagnant market backed by licensing helps the monopolists to keep out potential competitors. In a flourishing market too, licensing may allow monopoly houses to control production and push up prices.

A more basic question asked was whether India even had an anti-monopoly policy at all. It could be argued that the M R T P Act never really took off in India. In the post-Independence period there are very few business houses which have experienced a marked decline as a result of Government policy.²⁰ In any case, only 10—11 per cent of cases were referred to the M R T P commission which in turn stipulated only certain techno-economic conditions such as export obligations.²¹

Measurement of Monopoly Power

Although Chandra's paper provoked considerable controversy two aspects of the problem he had taken up were ignored. The first was the measurement of the economic power and strength of monopoly houses. Owing to the nature of the data, Chandra was compelled to concentrate on the "inner circle" companies, leaving out the "outer circle" ones completely. Also, companies which engaged in banking and insurance were not included, although most business houses did own such groups right up to 1972. Since, one of Chandra's objectives was to analyse whether the monopoly houses have grown faster compared to the rest of the corporate sector, these omissions may be serious for the following reasons. Firstly, one can think of cases as Nirmala Banerjee shows, where the expansion in small industry is the result of "large capital decentralising" rather than the small sector forging ahead. The same goes for the observation that units vertically linked to large business have grown faster than those which are not. In fact, Banerjee's paper shows that the index of production with 1970 as the base grew from 19.5 in 1971 to 69.3 in 1975 and 188.5 in 1976 for the small sector, and that of the large sector from only 104.2 in 1971 to 119.3 by 1975. If the growth of small industry has been the result of decentralization by large business, given the higher relative growth of output of the small sector vis-a-vis the large, then the decline or constancy of assets of monopoly houses cannot reflect the decline or stagnation in the monopoly power of these houses. Secondly, banking and insurance were the fastest growing sectors in the economy as well as being the almost exclusive reserve of the large houses. Thus an omission of this sector would underestimate the growth of monopoly houses.

With reference to the rivalry between monopoly houses in India and foreign capital, and in particular to the overlapping between monopoly houses and foreign capital in terms of control, very little discussion took place. It was not at all clear why, given the stagnant market conditions and the existence of a fairly substantial Indian capitalist class foreign capital should be at all interested in investing in this country.

Moreover, rivalry between domestic and foreign capital can take many forms, and it is not really obvious how a study of relative growth of assets of foreign and domestic companies can prove or disprove the existence of rivalry. Foreign collaboration agreements, for example, may be a sign of competition or collaboration depending on the conditions in the home market, and the nature of the agreement. Since an entire session of the seminar was devoted to the issue of foreign collaboration we can now turn to this aspect of Indian Industrialisation.

FOREIGN COLLABORATION AND THE CHOICE OF TECHNOLOGY

There seemed to be general agreement in the Seminar that foreign collaboration agreements benefited either foreign capital or a small segment of the Indian bourgeoisie. Bagchi and Dasgupta relying on Income-Tax Reports showed how the law has provided incentives to borrow rather than purchase technology from abroad.²² Before looking more closely at Bagchi and Dasgupta's paper, we should summarise an excellent account of foreign collaboration agreements given by Balraj Mehta.²³

History of Foreign Collaborations

Mehta noticed two stages in the history of foreign collaboration in India. The first was from the second plan to 1966, a period when 'turnkey' arrangements with foreign firms were made by the public sector in the 'core' sector. Essentially the turnkey arrangements were contracts for construction. They did not give any management rights to firms. This period was one of veiled hostility to foreign industry when expansion at Durgapur and Rourkela was carried out by Indians themselves. The Government had even withdrawn the request for foreign aid which was contrary to the more usual situation where aid was stopped by the donors. The Planning and Development division of Sindri, led by A R Chakravarty emerged as an important centre of opposition to foreign technology. The work of the Sindri technologists proved that Indians were capable of developing new processes by themselves. When trouble developed at the Durgapur and Cochin plants, this was not the result of faulty design by Indians but because of frequent breakdown in equipment imported from abroad. Often such imports were undertaken under pressure with only a minimum of inspection.

The second period which began around 1968-69, saw a counter offensive by Indian bureaucrats on technical engineers. By 1969, political leaders had lost faith in any commitment to development, and spoke in populist tones. Hence the bureaucracy gained in influence. It also found a natural ally in foreign capital which was interested in setting up new plants in India. The natural consequence of these two tendencies was an understanding between the bureaucracy and foreign capital—an alliance

which tilted the balance against Indian technologists. A propaganda war was launched against Indian technologists. For example, the press reported a figure of Rs 130 crores as being necessary for the rectification of the Durgapur plant. Indian designers, it was said, had done a bad job. But on subsequent enquiry, a World Bank team estimated that only Rs 13 crores was necessary for the same rectification. The Indian Press had made no effort to enquire into the accuracy of the officially released figures. The same obstructionist policy of the bureaucracy was exhibited by the case of foreign exchange budgeting. In the case of Bombay High, which is acclaimed as a sound project, the Finance Ministry raised a Eurodollar loan at six and a half per cent interest rather than free foreign exchange from the reserves.

The haphazard way in which the C S I R was reorganised and the new policy directions given in private talks by George Fernandes and Biju Pattanaik advocating the setting up of 10 million ton steel plants geared completely for export, were all examples of a complete reversal of earlier turnkey arrangements.

Tax Laws and Foreign Collaboration

Bagchi and Dasgupta added to this theme of the Indian bureaucracy helping foreign firms by pointing out that :

“Under a wide set of conditions, Indian courts have regarded the expenditure for the right to use knowhow as *revenue* expenditure rather than capital expenditure, so that it has been straightaway considered deductible for tax purposes, whereas if it had been considered capital expenditure then in general, it would not have been allowed for such deduction”.²⁴

Further, although the law treated payments by Indians to foreigners or receipts by Indians from foreigners for import or export of technology on a symmetrical footing, most of the transactions under this head were in the form of payments by “Indians to foreigners and *not* the other way round”. The Indian firms were usually in a weak bargaining position vis-a-vis their foreign collaborators with the result that large concessions were made to foreign capital in return for small and transient benefits. Indian firms became continually dependent on foreign ones for imports of technology — a dependence which was encouraged by fiscal benefits conferred on them by existing tax laws.

One of the most harmful effects of the way in which foreign collaboration agreements were conducted was the dependence on foreign capital which they fostered. Technology acted as a medium for a link-up between foreign and local capital. Unlike Japan which had borrowed technology and used it for further technological generation, India failed to link research in the laboratories with the production process. In the case of the CSIR laboratories upto 85 per cent of the projects were used only in small-scale units.²⁵ Since the development of technology was a

learning process it was hindered by an interruption in this process. In the Indian case, the yardstick of 'profit' used to judge the efficiency of even public sector enterprises hindered the growth of indigenous technology.²⁶

Although few would argue against any kind of foreign collaboration whatsoever, the central issue was whether the existing nature of foreign collaboration agreements was biased in favour of foreign capital. The argument put forward by Bagchi and Dasgupta was opposed by Amaresh Bagchi who, while admitting that in income-tax law a distinction was made between capital and income, noted that capital gains were also subject to tax. In fact, he argued, when assessing expenditure, all expenditure incurred to earn a certain income should be counted for tax purposes. Royalties paid in India were subject to tax. Hence in case of agreements signed abroad, there was a possibility of firms facing double taxation. In order to assess the incentive offered to firms by income-tax decisions, one had to see how many agreements were signed abroad and how many in this country. M S Narayanan effectively answered Amaresh Bagchi's doubts. Firstly, by far the majority of collaboration agreements were signed abroad. Secondly, while it was true that firms who *bought* rather than rented technology could still be subject to a capital gains tax, the payment for such purchase could be stretched out over a long time. Thirdly, royalty was only a small part of the payment for technology.

Implications and Possibilities

The theory that a combination of foreign capital and Indian bureaucrats tilted the balance against Indian technology; or the observation that the existing tax laws favour foreign collaboration and in any case increase the dependence of local on foreign capital really has serious implications for the nature of the State in India. It is pertinent to ask why the Indian capitalists had not used their links with political leaders and the bureaucracy to strengthen their bargaining power vis-à-vis foreign firms. One reason could be the existence of foreign controlled rupee firms which are not interested in the diffusion of technology. Another could be the desire of local capital to look to the export market in the face of stagnancy in the home market. For example, after the FICCI delegation to Ghana, the Government had actually favoured the export of capital to Africa. The I D B I had given a Rs 20 crores commercial loan to Ghana at seven and a half per cent interest at a time when Indian industrialists were paying 13 per cent interest for their credit.²⁷ A third could be the weakening of the political power of the Indian bourgeoisie in face of a rising class of rich peasants who have gained from the introduction of the new seed-fertiliser technology in agriculture.

In spite of the encouragement given to foreign capital by the nature of foreign collaboration agreements it was still doubtful whether one could expect a substantial flow of foreign investment into India.

The slow growth of the Indian market would remain a barrier to industrial investment whether local or foreign. One could foresee two exceptions to this rule. In case of foreign controlled rupee companies, tariff barriers would allow them to profit from a protected market. Also, export of raw materials or natural resources from India undertaken by foreign companies operating in India or under the guise of foreign collaboration agreements may be an attractive avenue of investment since most multinationals would attempt to maximise profits over their entire global operations rather than from any one country. A control over raw materials could allow them an edge over competitors in the world market.

Appropriate Technology

The question of foreign collaboration in the acquisition of know-how is really a subset of a wider question of the appropriate technology for a developing country such as India. Professor A K N Reddy's paper was an attempt to lay down criteria on the basis of which the choice of technology should be made. Since this paper provoked considerable comment as well as admiration, I shall present a very brief outline of it here.

Reddy begins by stating that the development of technology in the present day was no longer a matter of "spontaneous innovation" by individuals but by and large a product of research institutions. Even these institutions suffer from a bias because they respond to only a few social wants and take up selected problems for research. Thus, "there is a process of *filtering* these wants, so that only some of them are transmitted as demands upon technological capability, and the rest are bypassed by these institutions".²⁸ In a market economy, it is effective wants or wants backed by purchasing power which influence research institutions most. He then goes on to argue that the western pattern of technology was a child of imperialist exploitation of the rest of the world, guided by the touchstone of profit maximisation, and with little regard for harmful effects on the environment. The western pattern of technology developed under conditions of cheap and plentiful raw materials, abundance of capital and shortage of labour. These conditions could not be created in the developing countries. Moreover, the developed countries could go on enjoying their present high standard of living only because the poorer countries were subject to deprivation. For Reddy, "the conclusion is clear: . . . it is extremely doubtful from a resource point of view, whether the poor nations can ever achieve similar standards as the rich."²⁹ Apart from the improbability of being able to develop on western lines, there were social reasons why development on the western pattern was undesirable for a country such as India. Such technology led to a growth of inequality, and produced a skewed demand for skills. Thus Reddy advocates a pattern of Indian industrialisation *not* aimed

at the maximisation of GNP but making "the structure and content of growth" the central consideration. The choice of technology must reflect social wants, and should be open to public discussion rather than remain a matter of mystification.

Reddy's solutions require planning on a grand scale, and obviously could not be achieved within the framework of a market economy. If Reddy wanted to emphasise the wastefulness and the exploitative nature of capitalism or to warn proponents of a capitalistic system for India, that this was not feasible here, then I think, he received a very sympathetic hearing. It was also difficult to disagree with the suggestion that the choice of technology should be open to public discussion and that one should try to get away, as Bagchi put it, from the 'controller's mentality' which refused to spell out alternatives. On the other hand, one could not be but struck by the other-worldliness of Reddy's formulations. There was something utopian about the suggestion that a country such as India could on its own change the rules of the game played by capitalist firms in the world market. The fact that a poor country such as India should choose its technology so as to prevent harmful effects on environment is one such suggestion. It is the industrialised countries which are responsible for the bulk of pollution and it is they who should make the first move with regard to the control of harmful effects of many industrial processes. Secondly, maximisation of GNP need not conflict with a different structure of growth. Indeed, one of the reasons why the capitalist order in a country such as India must be overthrown is precisely because it cannot maximise GNP, because it is wasteful of resources and manpower. The crucial point is that in a capitalist economy there is a divergence between private and social cost, so that what is good for an individual firm or industry may not necessarily be so for the society as a whole. Rapid growth in a few areas such as highly priced luxury goods may pull up the national growth rate in the short run but may well be inimical to a process of sustained long run growth by keeping the market narrow.

The Seminar devoted a session to discussing the reasons for India's industrial stagnation, and we shall turn to this in the last section of this report. In a way, many of the papers on the structure of industry and foreign collaboration were also tangentially concerned with the way in which the fruits of whatever growth has taken place have been shared. The central proposition remains: is rapid growth in India possible without a move towards a more egalitarian system and if not, what kind of egalitarianism will free the economy from cycles of stagnation and low growth? Of course, there are many possible explanations for the stagnation in Indian industry even if one starts off by accepting that there has been a stagnation. It is to some of these explanations that we now turn.

INDUSTRIAL STAGNATION

Although there may be a dispute about the exact magnitude of the deceleration in Industrial growth in India, there seems to be a general agreement that a deceleration has indeed occurred. Between 1951 and 1965 the index of industrial production showed an annual compound growth rate of over 7 per cent only; 3.5 per cent between 1965 to 1970 and less than 4 per cent between 1970 and 1975. Thus from the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's India has experienced stagnation in the growth of industrial output.⁸⁰

Several explanations have been given for this stagnation in industry. Government spokesmen have blamed extraneous factors: the weather, the war with Pakistan, and the like. The school of neo-classical economists have blamed the government for bureaucratic inefficiency, and placing too many controls on the economy although such an argument cannot explain why stagnation persisted even after the controls were lifted. Ashok Mitra has emphasised the rise of the rich peasantry, and the shift in the terms of trade in agriculture's favour as an important cause of deceleration in industrial growth. Srinivasan and Narayan have stressed the link between deceleration in public investment and industrial growth. Long term constraints on the Indian economy, especially the narrowness of the market have been pinpointed by many, notably by A-K Bāgchi and K N Raj.

Patnaik's Explanation

To this wide range of explanations, Patnaik adds yet another.⁸¹ Industrial stagnation accompanied by inflation can be explained by two rather inter-related developments: i) a rise in the share of the private sector's economic surplus ii) a willingness on the part of the government to "liquefy" this surplus by buying commodities from the private sector. Given full capacity use in the economy, Patnaik shows that the inflationary impact of a rise in public investment would be greater if the state purchases additional stocks previously held by the private sector. Secondly, he tries to show that given such a policy of holding private sector's stocks by the state, the inflationary potential of an increase in public investment will be even higher if private sector prices rise relative to wages and taxes, that is, if the economic surplus accruing to the private sector rises. A desire by the state to expand public investment is thwarted by inflation which accompanies it so that pursuing a policy of liquefaction of private stocks at higher than prevailing prices results in slowing down of public investment earlier than would have been the case if such a policy was not followed. Since it is the expansion of public investment which leads the boom, bringing higher private investment in its train, Patnaik's hypothesis presents a model of a trade cycle which can explain relatively long term stagnation of the economy.

Explains Fluctuations Rather Than The Trend

In the debate which followed Patnaik's paper, R Sau⁸² pointed out that the stagnation had set in much earlier than the period when the government policy of stockholding became significant. The same was true of foreign exchange reserves. In fact the accumulation of stocks by the state was more the result than a cause of inflation. Moreover, why did not stock holding by the government stimulate private investment rather than speculation. Bagchi⁸³ added to this criticism by observing that although Government stock holding assured a level of speculative profit, reservation demand is conditioned by class relations within society. A shrinking of domestic demand moreover, inhibits both public and private investment. He doubted whether transactions in the market can even explain fully long term trends in India. Patnaik's model may explain fluctuations along the long run trend rather than the trend itself and was therefore a subset in a larger set accounting for the long term trends in the economy. Patnaik himself agreed with the view that his model was a sub-model in a wider framework, but claimed that he had been interested in investigating the triggering off point of the industrial stagnation as well as being intrigued by the prevalence of stagnation in industry at a time when agricultural productivity was rising.

Although Patnaik presented a closely argued analysis, as Bhabatosh Datta noted, such an argument could be valid for one set of conditions and not another. "Stagnation" had troubled many other countries, besides India, where Patnaik's analysis would not hold. However even in the Indian case, I think Patnaik's model leaves a few questions unanswered.

The effect of following a policy of liquefying private sector stocks by buying them at higher than prevailing prices, to quote Patnaik, is that "A step-up in Public investment which past experience would have dictated as being of an appropriate order would now bring about a much sharper price rise owing to private speculation than at a corresponding stage of the boom in the past. *In so far as the government wishes to avoid such sharp inflations for political reasons...* the current boom would be terminated somewhat sooner, or to put it differently, the total public investment undertaken in the current boom would be lower in relative terms than in earlier booms."⁸⁴

Thus the timing and the magnitude of a cut-back in public investment depends entirely on the *politically tolerable degree of inflation*. It is important to realise, however, that continued inflation not only leads to a redistribution of income within society but also to a change in the political balance. The degree to which inflation can be tolerated is itself a variable, and may be different not only in different political situations but can also vary according to the nature of the inflation itself. One can legitimately ask how one gets an estimate of a "tolerable" degree infla-

tion. In many Latin American countries such as Chile or Argentina, the rate of inflation has often exceeded hundred per cent per annum. In India, the political dangers of inflation, say in foodgrain prices, can be kept at bay for a considerable length of time, by unloading stocks—often imported—at key urban points. Moreover, if between two booms the Government's ability to withstand inflationary pressure increases, than public investment can still be higher in the second boom than the first with the economy undergoing higher inflation. In such a situation, it is not clear why a section of the capitalist class would not opt for productive investment rather than speculation.

Concluding Remarks

In this report, I have attempted to present a critical summary of the seminar on "Indian Industrialisation". I have reversed the order of much of the debate which took place in order to highlight the more interesting issues. I, for one, would have been happier if many of the policy alternatives implicit in the discussion had been more clearly spelt out. Moreover, in certain cases—for example foreign collaboration agreements—it would have been very useful to have a method for working out the implicit subsidies or explicit advantages given to foreign firms. If the wastage of resources, and the economic irrationality of the present economic system in India had been more cogently pinpointed, it would have been easier for non-professionals to understand and discuss many of the issues; and the ideas discussed in the Seminar would have had a wider social significance.

SATISH MISHRA

¹ J C Sandesara *The Small Industry Question: Issues, Evidence and Suggestions*, p 2.

² Sandesara, p 6.

³ Nirmala Banerjee, *Small is Beautiful*.

⁴ Banerjee, p 3.

⁵ Banerjee, p 4.

⁶ Banerjee, p 5

⁷ T S Papola, *Industrialisation, Technological Choices and Urban Labour Markets*.

⁸ Papola, p 4.

⁹ Papola, p 4.

¹⁰ Papola, p 7.

¹¹ Comment by Nirmal Chandra.

¹² Comment by A K Bagchi.

¹³ Sandesara, p 7.

¹⁴ N K Chandra, *Monopolies and the Industrial Licencing Policy*.

Part A - Growth of Monopoly Houses.

Part B - Industrial Licencing Policy.

¹⁵ Chandra, part A, p 13.

¹⁶ Chandra, part A, p 13.

¹⁷ Chandra, part B, p 27.

¹⁸ Comment by R Sau.

¹⁹ Comment by P Patnaik.

- ²⁰ Nirmal Chandra.
²¹ Comment by T S Papola.
²² K Amiya Bagchi and Subhendu Dasgupta, *Imported Technology and the Legal Process*.
²³ Talk by Balraj Mehta.
²⁴ Bagchi and Dasgupta, p 4.
²⁵ Comment by Amulya Reddy.
²⁶ Comment by O P Aggrawal.
²⁷ Balraj Mehta.
²⁸ Amulya Kumar N Reddy, *An Alternative Pattern of Indian Industrialisation*, p 3.
²⁹ Reddy, p-6.
³⁰ Prabhat Patnaik, *An Explanatory Hypothesis on the Industrial Stagnation*.
³¹ Patnaik, p 8.
³² Comment by R Sau.
³³ Comment by A K Bagchi.
³⁴ Patnaik, p 17-18.

Problems of Federal Polity

REPORT OF THE FIFTH ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF THE INDIAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

1 IN POST-EMERGENCY India, in the context of the decisive defeat of the authoritarian Congress regime at the hands of the people, the question of the structure of the State in India as related to the people and their democratic struggle, has come to the fore. It is clear that the unity of our people is a fundamental imperative of the democratic struggle, and that its advance alone is the guarantee against the re-emergence of authoritarianism. The democratic aspirations of our people get increasingly expressed in their search for a radical socio-economic transformation, as the ruling classes respond not merely with increasing coercion but also with new devices and techniques to divide the people and divert them from their historic objective.

2 The unity of the peoples of India, living under vastly different conditions and involved in varied economic, political and cultural relations, and of the country itself, is a precious asset built up in the course of the people's struggle for freedom from a brutal and cunning imperialist power which pursued a policy of divide and rule. The militant unity of the freedom fighters was forged in a complex and difficult situation, in the face of opposition from the colonial rulers and from the feudal and other obscurantist forces which stood to gain from the division of the peoples of the Indian sub-continent. British rule was the greatest obstacle to the development of nationalities and to advancing a democratic solution to the national question.

3 The struggle for the formation of linguistic States was an important achievement of the democratic movement, which created a condition for the further development of the people's unity. The principle of linguistic States was asserted against the opposition, including brutal suppressive force, of the colonial rulers and also the rulers of independent India.

The National Question in Independent India

4 In independent India, the ruling classes have been unable to tackle the national question in a democratic way. This is a characteristic not only of the Indian situation but also of all those situations in the

present epoch where the bourgeoisie is confronted with this problem. The very path of development chosen by the rulers of India make them nurture and encourage divisive and chauvinistic forces that raise slogans such as 'sons of the soil'. Such has been the policy pursued by the Congress Party which ruled until recently at the Centre. What is of grave concern is that some powerful sections of the Janata Party also propagate revivalist, chauvinistic and obscurantist slogans. Such policies create opportunities for fissiparous forces, which stand in opposition to the democratic movement, and must be opposed.

5 It must be unambiguously recognised that India is a multinational country and that Centre-State relations constitute an arena where this question is directly and sharply expressed. The historical circumstances in which capitalism arose and has developed in India brought in their wake a complex uneven development of nationalities and regions. This uneven development is inseparably tied to the entrenched existence of backward relations of production in Indian society and the most retrograde survivals of the feudal past. Parasitical monopoly capital and landlordism are the two big obstacles in the way of achieving the real equality of nationalities. And it would be fatal if we fail to recognise that imperialism preys upon and fully exploits this situation in India.

Centralisation of Power

6 In pursuit of their path of development, the rulers of India have resorted to growing centralisation of power. This has brought in its wake a multiplication and diversification of the coercive apparatus of the State, and the emergence of an overweening executive to meet the deepening discontent of the people. The rulers have invaded the domain of the States and ruthlessly taken away State rights. They have reduced the States to the position of clients as far as resource mobilisation and allocation are concerned. They have shown a dictatorial intolerance of opposition parties in office in the States, especially the left and democratic parties. They have also centralised key administrative services for fashioning a bureaucracy to be utilised at their behest. The Emergency intensified this process tremendously, and the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution was its most comprehensive institutionalisation. Thus, the issue of Centre-State relations has got integrally tied up with the growing attack on democratic rights and civil liberties of the people.

7 A notable feature of the present situation is that the hegemony of the Congress Party which ruled at the Centre for three decades has been overthrown and different political parties are in office in the different States. The ruling party at the Centre is different from the parties in office in several States. It has to be effectively recognised that with the disappearance of one-party rule, the distinctive political development of various States and the separate political preferences of parties are a

concrete reality. It is for the peoples of all parts of India to decide on the political programmes put before them and the winning of State autonomy becomes very important in the actualisation of this choice.

The Demand for State Autonomy

8 It must be borne in mind that the question of State autonomy and State rights cannot be reduced to a choice between the federal and unitary principles. The formation of a larger market for commodity production and the requirements of big capital demand growing centralisation and denial of the autonomy of States. The issue, therefore, lies essentially in the spheres of operation of the law of centralisation inherent in the path of development itself. It is not to be tackled merely at the level of making constitutional amendments, although the importance of this should not be underestimated. In this context, it must be noted that the slogan of economic and political 'decentralisation' raised by the spokesmen of the ruling party, or in other circles, will not at all serve the cause of the democratic movement in relation to the struggle for State autonomy.

9 The demand for State autonomy must be concretely related to the people's struggle for a new socio-economic order that ensures the most profound and wide-ranging rights and opportunities for the toiling and democratic people, abstracted from the struggle for such radical social transformation, the slogan of State rights and autonomy is self-defeating. Unless the beneficiaries of State autonomy are the people themselves, this slogan ceases to be a property of the democratic movement in this country. At the same time, in the concrete situation of growing centralisation of power, the fight for State rights becomes a precondition for democratic advance. Failure to take up this issue and actively fight for it would mean abandoning the field to opportunist and reactionary forces set upon dividing the people with chauvinistic slogans.

10 In this connection, a view was expressed by some that the demand for reallocation of powers between the Centre and the States, or even the demand for repeal of the constitutional provision for President's Rule or of the Centre's authority to deploy the Central police in the States, would set back the democratic movement for a long period by weakening the conditions for the unity of the people against their exploiters. This view was considered in detail and it was emphasised that neither the larger theoretical dimensions nor the concrete political situation of the present permitted acceptance of such a view. On the contrary, recognising the importance of the issue raised in the memorandum on Centre-State relations adopted by the West Bengal Cabinet, it is necessary to start a country-wide debate in order that a thoroughgoing reallocation of powers between the Centre and the States is brought about. The policy statement made by the Prime Minister summarily

rejecting the demand for State autonomy on the ground that the States already enjoy excessive powers and that further powers would lead to the division of the country is totally unacceptable.

11 One of the most menacing developments in the recent period is the policy advocated, notably by representatives of the ruling party and Central Government such as Raj Narain, of imposing Hindi as the 'national' or 'link' language on the non-Hindi speaking peoples. This has posed an immediate and concrete threat to the unity of the peoples of this country. The different languages spoken by the peoples of India, including the minorities, are the national languages which should be honoured and given a free opportunity to develop in education, administration and social intercourse at all levels.

12 The participants in the proceedings examined the range of issues presented above from many sides. They discussed, among other subjects:

- the way in which the Constitution has been framed, worked, amended and manipulated
- the ideology and political thinking involved in this
- property relations in their juridical aspects
- the development of para-military forces, notably the Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police, against the people.
- the use of the armed forces and other coercive instruments against the people of the border nationalities, and
- the nature of political parties, including regional parties, and of their slogans, programme and practice.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Most of the papers presented in the session on economic aspects and the discussions that ensued centred mainly around fiscal aspects of centre-state relations and regional imbalances.

13 It was generally agreed that Centre-State financial relations have to be viewed in the context of two factors:

- (a) The extreme concentration of assets and incomes in the hands of a few both in agriculture and industry, which severely constrains resource mobilisation and the overall pace and pattern of development.
- (b) Under the Constitution, land is the main base for revenue for the States, while industry and commerce, which constitute the more dynamic sectors, constitute the main base for revenues accruing to the Centre.

Centralisation of Funds and Central Interference

14 As a consequence, with every plan, the gap between the needs of the State and their own resources has widened thereby increasing the dependence of the States on the Centre and undermining the

fiscal foundations of federal polity. This is reflected in the following facts:

- (a) The share of Central funds in current State expenditures rose from an already high 40 per cent in the First Plan to nearly 60 per cent in the Fifth Plan;
- (b) The outstanding indebtedness of the States to the Centre has increased from about Rs 240 crores in 1952 to about Rs 8,000 crores in 1977. Some of the States are confronted with the problem of repayments exceeding current borrowing from the Centre;
- (c) Interest payments on the outstanding loans referred to above constitute nearly 40 per cent of current transfers through the Finance Commission.

15 The record of the past thirty years clearly demonstrates that the Centre has used its extensive command over resources to impose its will on the recipient States and to encroach upon subjects constitutionally devolved on the States. This is best revealed by the operation of the mechanism of federal fiscal transfers and the pattern of federal expenditures. Besides the fiscal instruments, the Centre has also used its vast power in relation to industrial policy, licensing and so on, accentuating in the process inter-state disparities as well as the concentration of economic power.

16 The Constitution envisaged that a quasi-judicial body like the Finance Commission should assess the fiscal needs of the States and determine the principles for tax-sharing and grants-in-aid. In practice, however, more than 60 per cent of total current transfers, have been made outside the purview of the Finance Commission. These transfers are discretionary in nature. In approving the projects and schemes and the size of the State plan, the Centre has exerted enormous influence and has imposed several specific conditions, thereby restricting the freedom of the states to utilise these resources in a manner conducive to the interests of the States' economy. As for the special grants, they are often handed out as rewards or held back as punishments, depending on whether or not the State Governments involved are toeing the line of the party in power at the Centre.

17 There has been no public review outside the Parliament of the manner in which the Centre utilises its resources. Often this has resulted in an enormous increase of wasteful and unproductive expenditure at the Centre. A striking example of this is the vast and persistent increase in defence expenditure over the years. Besides, the Centre has encroached into areas which strictly do not fall within its purview thereby restricting the area of operation open to the States. Examples of this are the phenomenal expansion of the law and order machinery at the Centre, and Central intrusion and dominance, in areas like agriculture, health, education, and so on.

18 Finally, it needs to be emphasized that the fiscal transfers to the States have accentuated inter-state disparities, which already existed on account of the uneven nature of capitalist development in the colonial period and over the plans.

Resource Transfer to the States

19 Taking the above facts and arguments into consideration, it is necessary to restrict the quantum of Central Expenditure on the one hand and substantially increase the share of resources transferred to the States on the other. In doing so, the scale of unproductive expenditure on defence and the repressive bureaucratic machinery should be drastically scaled down. This would call for a reallocation of functions and powers with a view to drastically pruning the Central and the concurrent lists. In determining the distribution of the enhanced quantum of unconditional transfers to the States, due consideration should be given to the needs of the less developed States. The jurisdiction of the Finance Commission should be considerably expanded to cover not only tax-sharing and grants-in-aid, but also loan funds. The operations of the State-owned commercial banks and other financial institutions should be reoriented to finance State Projects and development schemes. Further, Corporation tax, Customs duties and the bulk of excise should be brought under the compulsorily divisible pool. As suggested by the Administrative Reforms Commission Study Team, the unproductive part of the outstanding debt should be written off and the balance should be rescheduled to ease the burden of repayment on the part of the States.

20 It, of course, goes without saying that the above demands for increased economic autonomy for States implicitly raise and must be explicitly linked with the demand for increased political autonomy.

21 Reducing the sphere of activity of the Centre is not intended to weaken the planning process. In fact the States should be actively involved in the process of National Economic Planning. The National Planning Commission should perform the tasks of integration and co-ordination, which arise in the case of large-scale industries and projects of national importance. All other economic activities should be planned and carried out at the level of the States. The National Development Council, where all the states should be equally represented, should have a major role in determining the composition and functions of the Planning Commission and in arriving at all important planning decisions.

22 Fears were expressed by some that the above measures, which amount to an increase in the powers of the states, might help consolidate the reactionary regimes in certain states and thus hold back development in the larger interest of the people. In response to this, it needs to be pointed out that while it is definitely necessary to demand

greater power for the states, keeping in mind the concentration of power in the Centre in the past, the authoritarian tendencies that developed and the aspirations of the people in the different States, the above recommendations in no way presume that either the problem of Centre—State relations or that of the overall development of the States can even begin to be solved without linking the above demands with that of the larger democratic movement of the people against oppressive socio-economic conditions. To put it positively, the consciousness of the peoples in the various States must be roused to combat the abuse of economic autonomy by reactionary State Governments.

CULTURAL ASPECTS

23 Socio-economic and historico-political factors as determinants of culture understandably play an important role in the elucidation of problems relating to the cultural aspects of federal polity. The basis of the entire discussion was the implicit agreement on the multinational and multicultural character of India rejecting, in unmistakable terms, any advocacy of secession while stressing the need for more autonomy.

24 In a diverse country like India the right of every cultural group, whether large or small, should be respected. This means the creation of an atmosphere in which every cultural group can preserve and promote its cultural heritage without any imposition, discrimination or the introduction of communal, sectarian and reactionary elements.

25 It needs to be affirmed that our sense of belonging to India, arises not only from the fact that we are common inheritors of the legacies of historic cultures and civilizations but also as partners in the struggle for freedom against imperialism and for the building of a new India which in its turn continues to give a new meaning and dimension to our common inheritance. Hence, any plea to understand the multinational character of India and to promote its various distinctive cultures also implied the preservation and strengthening of the unity of India as a whole.

The Language Problem

26 Though it could be argued that the problem of nationalities could be understood and resolved differently in different historical circumstances it has become co-terminous with linguistic cultures in India. It is therefore necessary to create conditions in which each language will play its role. Discussions based on this broad framework led to the following conclusions:

LANGUAGE

- a) Equality of all languages in India should be ensured.
- b) Conditions should be ensured for the fullest development of all regional languages without giving any special privilege to any particular language.
- c) English should be replaced by the regional languages of the states in all spheres of

official activity. The languages of sizeable linguistic minorities in different states shall be made the ancillary official languages.

- d) The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution should be amended so as to include several more languages for recognition for which there exists strong popular demand.
- e) For inter-State and Centre-State communication no language should be imposed as a link language, such a link language has to evolve democratically.
- f) Whereas Hindi/Hindustani has a considerable spread in the country, the increasing sanskritization of the language reflects a communal and elitist bias of the current policy making it unsuitable for wider acceptance.

EDUCATION

- a) Education should basically be a state subject. However, for maintaining a common core content of education at all levels and for co-ordination of higher education and research through consultative processes, the centre will have to play a significant role.
- b) Education should be secular and democratic and should be completely separated from religious interests
- c) The medium of instruction shall be the mother—tongue.
- d) Illiteracy should be completely eradicated. As the universalisation of primary education and complete adult literacy cannot be achieved within the confines of formal education these have to be taken up also as a part of people's democratic movement.

CROSS—CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cross-cultural communication plays an important role in creating economic, social and political dynamism and in strengthening the bonds of unity. For this purpose there should be a constructive use of all forms of mass media.

ADIVASIS

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which now provides protection to certain sections of the Adivasis in certain areas should be so amended as to provide protection for all Adivasi concentrations in various parts of India.

Communication

Brief Reply to a Critic

MADHU PRASAD has raised certain points in reviewing my book *AN EYE TO INDIA*, to which I want to respond. These responses are fraternal, just as the review was. I welcome the possibility for such a dialogue, and ask leave of you to use your space to conduct it.

First, there are minor matters which I want to correct, or dispose of. They have their own importance also. I was not in India for a year, but only during the winter of 1975-76. In this period, I obtained a good deal of information and travelled widely throughout India. Thereafter, I was in continuous receipt of documentary material sent to me from India, and I worked steadily—with one person's assistance—on accumulating, sifting and assembling side material until June 1976, when I started writing *An Eye to India*. It was completed and the typescript handed over to Penguin by October 1976. (It was updated in December 1976, just before it went to the printers; and further revised in March-April 1977, when it was already at proof stage. The book could have been published in May 1977, if Penguin had so decided. They did not. It was published at the end of July, and reached India at the beginning of August. It was published in Britain in October 1977, and in other countries later).

Next—and still a minor matter—it was not S Doraiswamy who told me 'I am a poor person and India is a desert', but a landless peasant in West Bengal. Instead, it was Doraiswamy who said of the Emergency—and not directly to me—'it is not for this that Congress fought the British'. The error of attribution (on page 129) is one of the 65 printer's errors in the book—the result of the pressure under which it was printed—which are being corrected for its reprinting.

Next, what seems to be your reviewer's mistake: India's population is obviously not 'one third the size of (China's)', but roughly one third less than China's. There is a substantial difference; of 300 millions.

Now, let me come to matters of real substance, which I could not let pass without comment. After several pages of description of the book's contents, your reviewer instead of taking up analytically any of the main theoretical and political issues raised in my book—such as my

interpretation of the political and economic relationship between the Soviet Union and India, which is ignored entirely, a most puzzling matter—accuses me (fraternally) of a number of sins of omission and commission.

The last sub-heading in the review refers to 'incompleteness' and 'fatalism'. In the short revision of the same review in *People's Democracy* (October 30, 1977), the same charges are made, and with as little basis. I would concede 'incompleteness' in a broad sense, of course. What book is 'complete', what politico-economic analysis of India has ever been, or could be? Such an abstract and idealist model of perfection should not be so readily adopted by any Marxist critic; Deficiencies and inadequacies yes, 'incompleteness', no.

'Unfortunately', writes Madhu Prasad 'Selbourne having successfully undertaken the task of unravelling the links between every facet of the emergency and the attempts of a faction to serve ruling class interests, seems to be unable to *restore complexity* to the political crisis which he has bared down to essentials' (my emphasis). What is the point of this criticism? What purpose is served — politically, intellectually, ideologically, objectively in 'unravelling the links', and then *re-ravelling* them, which is what your critic appears to be demanding? This is pure academicism

In the same paragraph, I am told that I 'dismiss' the 'historic defeat' of the Congress with the words, 'instead, debacle'; and that I there return to 'the continuity of deprivation and oppression in the lives of the people'. To the last, I readily plead guilty, because I was right to do so, as the post-Congress period shows. But there is no dismissal of the Congress defeat with *two words*, as your reviewer improperly suggests. First, many times in the book's text, I refer to the political problems of legitimizing a tyranny, and I point throughout to the likelihood of an election.

Then, when it is announced, I seek to explain its reasons, however insufficiently. It was designed to provide under the pressure of deepening internal party hatreds and divisions, and the emergency's political and economic failure, all opportunity to purge party dissentients and silence critics, by appealing over their heads to the Indian people' (p 363). Yes, I say a 'debacle' followed, as indeed it was. But this is not 'dismissive', it is the criticism which is casual. For in the same paragraph, I state that 'the accumulated anger of the people overrode the obstacles of fear and coercion. The election proved suicidal not to the opposition but to the ruling faction, the reaping of a *whirlwind* (my emphasis). Is this a dismissal of the election? What I refused to do in the text, and refuse to do now, is to have any illusions about the Congress defeat, and its significance for the well being of the people.

Then come two paragraphs in Madhu Prasad's review which seem to me very careless in a critic. The assertion that I 'see the overthrow

of Mrs Gandhi's dictatorial rule as merely a ruling class manoeuvre carried out over the heads of the people' is the opposite of my position, as the reviewer well knows, and as my quotation from the book has shown. I wrote that the election was an appeal '*over the heads of critics to the Indian people*' your reviewer transforms this into a manoeuvre carried out *over the heads of the people*'. This low quality of fraternal criticism will not do.

I do not appreciate, your reviewer says, that the people of India had '*never before* (sic) united on such a scale to fight for their rights' (my emphasis.) This is, I believe, an enthusiastic overstatement. Among other things, the struggle for independence—your reviewer would have us believe—was dwarfed by the unity and scale of the struggle of the Indian people against the emergency, and which culminated in the electoral defeat of March 1977. I cannot accept this, for a simple reason: it is not true. The left and democratic forces benefited more from a miscalculation in the strategies of the ruling junta than from the unity of their struggle to overthrow it. Your reviewer knows this, and so do your readers. This is not to undervalue this struggle, or its martyrs and victims, it is to place it in proper perspective, free of illusion, which is a political duty.

Then, I exhibit a kind of "academic" purity in my approach to the process by which the workers and peasants will emancipate themselves. 'Academic'? Comrade reviewer, I a teacher, and have been for twelve years, at the college of the labour movement in Oxford, a college which is not part of the University. It is looked down upon, perhaps for class reasons—even by 'Marxists' teaching in British Universities—precisely because it lacks this 'academic purity' which you speak of. I write several times in such terms as these: 'only the breaking of the land monopoly of the landlords, their expropriation, and the mass distribution of land financed for peasant production, will break the structures of rural bankruptcy and destitution' (p 209). And, 'it is not the "surplus" but the land itself—the primary means of production—which must be distributed to the people of India' (p 363). This was described in the *Times of India* as 'heady stuff', but what exactly is meant by 'academic'? Do the two criticisms not have the same meaning? And finally, 'India's miseries make a nonsense of all fine calculation falling short of revolution.' Is this 'academic purity'? Is this 'fatalism'? Fraternal criticism fails in its duty, if it makes such casual accusations.

Next it is quite true that I do not enter sufficiently far into analysis of the 'different' political—tactical lines' adopted by the left parties in India. This would have required a detailed historical consideration of the standpoint of the CPI, CPI(M) and CPI(ML), which was not my subject. The emergency, its causes and leading phenomena, and its effects upon the people and institutions of India, was my subject. This I made clear in the preface. And to prove the point that I supposedly lack 'the ability to grasp the strategic direction and importance of tactical

questions', your reviewer adduces in evidence my 'tentative hypothesis that the experience of West Bengal suggests that parties of the working class should not engage themselves in the parliamentary arena as this leads to a jettisoning of democratic norms by the ruling classes!'

There is no such 'tentative hypothesis' in my book. I have re-read the only passage which could have justified this distortion, which is on page 19. I wrote there that the deposition of the United Front governments in West Bengal by strong arm methods (which were naturalized in the emergency period), constituted an 'example of the political consequences of the entry, however misguided, on to the field of parliamentary practice of political parties demonstrably attempting to represent the interest of the working classes. Should they go beyond, or merely seek to go beyond, mere palliatives, it is often the signal for the jettisoning of the rules of parliamentary democracy by its erstwhile proponents'.

My statement is an orthodox and correct position on the way in which the norms of bourgeois democracy are scuttled when a ruling class is threatened. Your reviewer's distortion is somewhat more subtle than those discussed earlier, but it is still a distortion.

I have gone into this review in detail, because it is — in general — a serious assessment of my work. The review warranted attention and I am grateful for many of its judgments. I anticipated comment and debate on other matters, as on the question of the Soviet Union and on broad problems of method. I have sought to correct, in this brief reply, errors of fact and taken issue with what I think are errors of judgment. I have used harder words of counter criticism than your reviewer—each as careless and casual—for which I may myself be criticized. But this polemic is (for me) within fraternal bounds and is designed to be useful.

DAVID SELBOURNE

Review Article

Towards An Understanding of the Non-Brahman Movement

CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN COLONIAL SOCIETY—THE NON-BRAHMAN MOVEMENT IN WESTERN INDIA, 1873-1930, by Gail Omvedt, Scientific Socialist Education Trust, Bombay, 1976, Rs 40.

THE book is a slightly revised version of a Ph D dissertation accepted by the Department of Sociology of the University of California, Berkeley, in March 1973. The author says that the ultimate surplus which made this book possible was the labour of Indian peasants, as her field research was mainly financed from the American aid rupees of the PL 480 funds.

A scientific understanding of the non-Brahman movement, which had such a powerful ideological impact on Maharashtra, has to be welcomed. One learns from the achievements and mistakes of the past to avoid new pitfalls in the present and guard the purity and consistency of the revolutionary proletarian movement.

There have been two wrong approaches to the non-Brahman movement hitherto. There has been an uncritical condemnation of the movement as sectarian and communal at the hands of earlier Congress bourgeois leaders, just as they have condemned every independent movement of the masses which threatened to go out of their reach. The working class and Communist movement knew what it is to suffer at the hands of the bourgeois leadership. The other wrong approach has been an uncritical glorification of the movement—a glorification which is easily accepted by present day Congress leaders because it does not teach the masses the real lessons to be drawn for the contemporary times. Some of the erstwhile non-Brahman leaders are loudest in their praise of the principles of the early movement, while in action they act as its worst opponents.

Jyotiba's Revolt

The author starts with the concept of cultural revolution—a vague non-class concept—which does not really grasp the full ambit of Jyotiba's

revolt. (A Cultural Revolution after the capture of power by the working class, is also not simply a "cultural revolution"—in the sense understood by the author).

One important, and perhaps the most valuable, point made by the author is the understanding of the different phases through which the original movement passed. The dilution of the movement, of its basic principles, started very early and Jyotiba himself had often to contend against it. Jyotiba the great iconoclast democrat, the friend of the poor and oppressed, never wavered in his loyalty to the masses in giving priority to their interests. Whether it was widow remarriage, education, liquor shops, caste exploitation, bureaucratic oppression or usury and land alienation, the economic loot of India, the building of a new market or decorations to greet a Viceroy at the expense of the people, or a dinner to a royal visitor, he defended the interests of the masses without prevarication and fears. His passion for the untouchables was unheard of and his sense of justice included every oppressed caste and he had absolutely no caste bias. He also demanded equal treatment for Muslims and Christians. No wonder the movement was originally named only as the *satyashodhak* movement—a movement against the untruth, injustice and hypocrisy of the Hindu social order dominated by Brahman supremacy.

A movement for equality, against caste-domination, was bound to have an anti-Brahman edge at the time, the Brahmans being the supreme caste in the Hindu hierarchy. Certain other factors added to the situation. Jyotiba's generation could not forget the nightmare of Peshwa rule under Bajirao II. Keer, the biographer of Jyotiba, quotes *Loakahitwadi* on the conditions under Bajirao II as follows: "If the farmers failed to pay him the desired amount even during a drought or famine, he poured over their children boiling oil from the frying pan—flogging was perfected on their stooping backs, and their heads were bent over suffocating smoke. Gunpowder was blown on their nasal and ears." *Loakahitwadi* is again quoted as saying that when Bajirao was deposed by the British, women rejoiced and said: "We are happy that there is now no more the rule of Bajirao II. The scoundrel has met the fate he deserved." The second factor was that despite the loss of political power, the Brahmans continued to dominate Hindu society, treating the non-Brahmans as inferior beings. Finally, the new intelligentsia under the British came mostly from the advanced Brahman community, occupying strategic positions as officials, professors, lower bureaucrats, writers and editors, creating the fear of the return of the old nightmare.

Though Jyotiba inevitably directed the fire of his righteous indignation at the Brahmans, his vision was not a narrow sectarian one, but consistently democratic. That is why he was the most uncompromising opponent of Brahmanism. There could be no compromise between him

and his opponents, for he did not seek a place for any particular community in the Hindu hierarchy.

Other Exponents of Non-Brahmanism

But things were otherwise with the other exponents of non-Brahmanism. Perhaps the most important figure after Jyotiba in the movement was Shahu, the feudal prince of Kolhapur, a descendant of Shivaji.

One could not imagine two more dissimilar personalities: Jyotiba, the common man who had loyalty only to the masses and who wanted to be the great leveller; the feudal prince, with his loyalty to the British, his insensitiveness to the economic exploitation of the masses by the British, and his narrow understanding of the fight against Brahmanism. Gail Omvedt very correctly distinguishes the two viewpoints, the dilution of the original movement that starts with the emergence of Shahu. She writes: "But while the seeds of conflict were laid in Shahu's administration and the British were very clearly willing to water the ground, it was the *Vedokta* ceremony which caused the plant to blossom." The Maharaja wanted to be recognised as a kshatriya and considered himself entitled to *Vedokta* rights, while the priests were giving him *Puranokta* rights, that is, treating him as a Shudra.

The author correctly comments: "In reality, the Maharaj at this time was a conservative one; he was concerned about insult to his purity of lineage, he was insisting on proper recognition as a Kshatriya. His initial position, in fact, was to state simply that the issue concerned only himself, and not the other aristocratic Maratha families." This was worlds apart from the principles and vision of Jyotiba.

Tilak, that doyen of bourgeois nationalism, was so 'progressive' that he considered that *Vedokta* rights might be awarded to Shahu as the 'Chhatrapati' or King but not as a hereditary family right.

Opportunism and the Dilution of Jyotiba's Principles

The Maharaja promoted education among the non-Brahmans and opened common hostels to which all castes were admitted. He outraged some of the Maratha sardars by freely mixing with untouchables and dining with them. The author pinpoints the real distance that separated the original from its diluted version:

The hostels both encouraged and were based upon a theme of separate caste development enlivened with a liberal spirit (for example, Muslim students were encouraged to stay in the Maratha hostel until their own was completed). They allowed social uplift without directly attempting to break down barriers between communities. Thus it was consistent for him to give full encouragement to untouchables' social progress and to sponsor Ambedkar

as the pre-eminent untouchable leader, but at the same time to stimulate the pride and separate sense of 'Maratha' or any other caste identity. The problem was that this was a conservative form of separate caste pride that in the end acted against any real inter-caste unity. The conservative aspect of reform could also be seen in Shahu's organisation in 1911 of a school for training of patils; this was focussed on the sons of hereditary village officials and thus on the maintenance of the traditional village system... (p. 129).

In the end he attempted to do without Brahman priests in his own way by setting up a Shivaji Kshatriya Vedic school for training Maratha priests in 1920 and by installing a Maratha high priest or installing a Kshatriya Jagatguru or world teacher of Kshatriyas in 1921. This action went against the *satyashodhak* principle which opposed any priestly intermediary, and caused a split within the non-Brahman movement itself. Almost all non-Marathas stringently attacked the ideas of Kshatriya Jagatguru, while Marathas on the whole, except for staunch *satyashodhaks* like Bhaskar Rao Jadav, supported it.

It was logical then that the Maharaja should turn to the Arya Samaj for educational purposes. However, this feudal prince, in the matter of untouchables, was far ahead of many avowed bourgeois rationalists.

Jyotiba died in 1890. Within ten years of his passing away, the new leader started fighting for *Vedokta* rights for the Marathas; and during another two decades the ideology had turned full circle, with compromise with the caste system — only, the Brahmins were to be replaced by Kshatriyas.

The poison then spread. It corroded the original revolutionary content of Jyotiba's *satyashodhak* principles. Only a hard core continued to stand by them, but they were more and more overwhelmed by the new opportunism to seek a favourable place for one's own community — especially the dominant Maratha community — in the Hindu hierarchy and, later on, for the struggle for office and patronage under the British. The British had a hand in this diversion (of this, there is ample evidence) but strangely enough the author hardly mentions it, whereas ample material concerning this should be available.

This opportunism to seek the shelter of one's own caste gathered momentum just at the time when the developing national movement, the increasing participation of the masses in it, and the need for further mobilisation of the masses was compelling the bourgeois nationalist leaders to change or modify their attitude of defence or neutrality towards caste-domination. Because of dilution, the *satyashodhak* movement began to be stagnant and to disintegrate, though a heroic band of fighters maintained their purity of outlook and rebellious spirit. Con-

ferences of various castes began to hold the field and the earlier unity of all down trodden castes against the hierarchical order began to get undermined. The author correctly brings out this phase also.

Compromise with British Imperialism

British imperialism was to profit by this straying away from the earlier rebellious mood. With this change in outlook, the anti-Brahman oratory became merely anti-Brahman and did not represent anti Brahmanism—an attack to destroy root and branch the entire caste system. It represented more the effort to secure positions in the new society, through verbal attacks against the system.

This led to relying on the British against the national movement, under the plea that it was led by the Brahmans. "In the 1920s, it represented one of the opposition parties which the British sought to utilise to work for legislative councils as a counter weight to Gandhian non-cooperation. It thus served as one of the many ways of resisting pressures for a radical mass nationalism." (p. 178)

This degradation of the movement, where the leadership ranged itself against the first great mass anti-imperialist ferment or resistance, marked the long distance which separated it from the earliest founders. The excuse that this was due to the excluding elitism of the earliest nationalist leaders themselves is a hypocritical excuse which the opportunist leaders pleaded for themselves, which the author should not have offered. The fact was that the leaders of the movement—the new non-Brahman intelligentsia — found the non-cooperation programme too radical, and were more concerned with improving their position with the help of the Government. Here their position differed from that of the Muslims also—the Muslim mass and radical leaders throwing themselves fully in the struggle, attracted by Congress support for Khilafat.

The result was that when huge numbers in cities and villages were boiling with indignation over the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, when the working masses in Bombay—mostly non-Brahman, if you please...were engaged in angry demonstrations against the visit of the Prince of Wales the Kolhapur Maharaja succeeded in drawing a large number of peasants to Poona to greet the Prince of Wales, who was given the honour of laying the foundation stone of the Shivaji Memorial.

The excuse that the Congress and the nationalist movement was dominated by Chitpavanas was also not there. For the new leadership represented by Gandhi and others was of a different mould—though belonging to the same class—and the earlier orthodox leadership of Maharashtra was on its way out of the Congress. It was, however, no accident that the diehard orthodox section of the Maharashtra Congress also opposed the non-cooperation movement like the new non-Brahman leaders.

Merger with the Congress

But, obviously, this divorcement from the anti-imperialist struggle could not last long. There was enough vitality in the movement to overcome this degradation, the more so that it was linked with the peasant mass; and the peasant mass of India after 1920 was a different one from that in the previous years. By 1930, when the new Congress movement began to reach the peasantry, the radical and fighting elements in the non-Brahman movement overcame their separation from the national movement, joined it, and the movement merged in the Congress.

Though this was far better than waiting on the British, or remaining in opposition to the national movement led by the Congress, this was certainly not a fitting sequel to the all-round rebellion which Jyotiba tried to unleash.

His programme of a total annihilation of the Hindu hierarchical system could have been carried out only by combining it with a programme for the destruction of feudal and semi-feudal relations and for political power in the hands of the democratic masses, in short, a programme for the completion of the democratic revolution. Neither the compromising leadership of the Congress, nor the new patriotic leadership of the non-Brahman movement was capable of this, because both belonged to the same class. Only the working class guided by Marxism-Leninism could have done it; but its movement was weak and it had just started demarcating its politics from that of the national bourgeoisie.

The sum total was a retreat on all fronts, helping the bourgeois leaders to gather the masses behind them. The hope of an independent revolutionary mobilisation of the people raised by the pioneer disappeared. A movement which could have independently mobilised the peasantry for a revolutionary onslaught went under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.

The author correctly sees the different phases connected with the rise and fall of the movement, but in her uncritical adulation, fails to note the enormity of the support given to the British against the people. Also, she fails to note specifically the fact that the peasant masses were rapidly being attracted towards the national struggle led by the Congress as she refuses to accept the fact that national sentiment was drawing the people together despite the fact that the bourgeois leaders had not shed their caste prejudices.

Methodological Weaknesses

The merit of the book notwithstanding, it suffers from many shortcomings, weaknesses and a wrong understanding. These stand out all the more sharply as the author expresses her interest in Marxism-

Leninism and the publishers certify it to be a Marxist-Leninist publication.

One has to regretfully state that the book does not pass this test. In the first place, it contains a lot of meaningless lumber manufactured in the West, where bourgeois sociological theories and theories of history are in a crisis. It is this approach that is dominant in the book, not the class approach. Secondly, the entire book is written out of the context of the national and anti-imperialist struggle, depicting the earlier Congress efforts as virtually Brahman efforts by Brahmans and for Brahmans. Notwithstanding her good intentions, she is too much entangled in these caste categories. Almost every bourgeois nationalist leader of the Congress is referred to as Brahman. Some Communist leaders are also referred to as Brahman Communists. Only, she does not refer to Gandhi as a bania. A person who claims to be a Marxist has to penetrate the class reality that takes shape behind the caste process and conflict and drag it in the open.

This is the inevitable result of an outlook which, under the pretence of analysing the conflict—the cultural conflict between various ethnic and other groups in a colonial society—ignores the basic conflict of all with the colonial power and colonial domination. The picture that is presented is that the upper class groups fights the colonial power for its advance; and the other group fight the upper class group for gaining advantage, for themselves; that is “Brahman national elites were struggling against a real British racism that affected all Indians; the non-Brahmans or untouchables against its equivalent in a real Brahman exclusiveness and disdain for lower castes.” Is this a Marxist statement? Was the significance of Jyotiba’s rebellion only of import to non-Brahmans; only directed towards improving the position of non-Brahmans in competition with the Brahmans? This is what the Brahmans alleged. A Marxist should realise that the objective significance was a liberation challenge to the entire Hindu society and to the colonial structure.

Such an approach and such conclusions are inevitable because the author frankly states that she does not rely on Marxism—Leninism. She found that Lenin and Stalin had left no guidance, and therefore the discussion of ‘plural society’ elements in the final section of the Chapter is drawn primarily from J S Funnivall, a Fabian Socialist.

Concealing Class Conflict

The author, although she now and then mentions classes and class interests, allows her outlook to be dominated by anti-Marxist concepts like plural society and competition between elites. To conceal the grim realities of the class struggle and the domination of the State by monopolies, the apologists of Western capitalists have advanced the concept of pluralism as an alternative to the Marxist class analysis of society and

political power. Pluralist democracy or pluralist society is explained as competition or compromise among a group of multitudes (not classes) which saves the society from the tyranny of the elite. Class analysis is replaced by the conflicts, and compromise, of groups. In spite of many good formulations and a correct understanding on some issues, this outlook dominates the author. One result of it is to divorce the understanding of the non-Brahman movement and other movements from its relation to the movement against the colonial order, from the basic antagonism of the people to the enslaver. Consider the following: "Groups who were disproportionately unrepresented, such as Muslims, non-Brahmans and elites from other linguistic regions in India, would direct their agitation at first against the dominant indigenous elites who more immediately blocked their advancement, not against the colonial rulers themselves. And just as the dominant elites based their demands vis-a-vis the British on their representing an Indian nationalism, so the excluded elites often based their demands against the dominant groups on some form of 'regional' or religious sub-nationalism; demands for a separate Bihari or Oriya or Kanarese province within which they might dominate an anti-Brahman, an anti-Northern Tamil nationalism, Muslim nationalism." (p. 31) The technique is simple here. The word elite is used to conceal the class affiliations of the leadership and its link with the economic development. The entire awakening of nationalities and oppressed sections under the poverty imposed by the colonial rulers is reduced to a fight between two sections of elites. The masses are made to look like pawns, a passive force having no will of its own. This is one of the purposes of the plural society-elitist competition theory.

In reality, the process of anti-imperialist struggle, the deterioration in the conditions of the masses, the anti-caste struggles, all were leading to a new awakening among various nationalities and religious groups. On a number of occasions, imperialist agents and selfish bourgeois leaders succeeded in diverting this democratic awakening into fratricidal channels, but the democratic thread was again picked up. Owing to several reasons into which we need not go, there was failure to bring the Muslim masses finally into the united fold and this was mainly a class failure of the compromising bourgeoisie who dared not champion the agrarian revolution.

Failing to understand the various democratic movements as part of a single process which was leading to a confrontation of the people of the masses, against imperialism and its allies, understanding them as conflicts between ethnic or caste groups, Gail Omvedt misses the main process:—the formation of a nation with its new classes and leadership arising from various sections of the old society. For her a Brahman remains a Brahman, a non-Brahman a non-Brahman. She fails to see the new class arising behind them, though here and there she notes them.

The New Intelligentsia

The earlier "Brahman" nationalists were not Brahmans only. In as far as they wielded the cudgel against the British, roused national feeling and anti-British hatred, they were fulfilling a national duty and serving the entire people. Many of them also directed their criticism against the Hindu caste system and exposed the tyranny of the Peshwa rule; some of them stood by Jyotiba till the last. By and large, they either defended the caste system or were only for a minor revised modification of the system. Some were open justifiers of the system, among them Lokamanya Tilak. With all that, they represented the new bourgeois intelligentsia, introducing new democratic values and making the people conscious of their slavery. To look upon them as just Brahmans is to do violence to the objective role they were playing. Quite a few chapters create the impression that these people were working only for Brahmans — a favourite theme of imperialist chroniclers. This amounts to underestimating the importance of the anti-imperialist consciousness that was being created. Mr. Keer, the biographer of Jyotiba, has a more sober and objective understanding of the role of these leaders, although he does not call himself a Marxist-Leninist. (See his estimate of Chiplunkar, who excelled everybody in his orthodoxy and vehemently defended the inequalities of caste rule, including the atrocities under the Peshwas).

This is not to say that these leaders did not deserve the thrashing which Jyotiba gave them. Compared with him, many were just dwarfs. But a Marxist-Leninist must understand the objective role of individuals and classes and place the workings of the social process candidly. He or she cannot borrow the spectacles of other classes or sections. Consciously or unconsciously, the author slurs over issues of common interest between the two sections — Jyotiba and his nationalist opponents — because they do not fit in with the theory of ethnic conflict. It is known that it was for denouncing a Brahman official to protect the interests of the Kolhapur Prince that Tilak and Agarkar saw the British jail the first time, and Jyotiba helped them fight the case. Tilak was denounced by his reactionary opponents as the leader of "telis and tambolis" (non-Brahmans), a rabble rouser. Even his imperialist critics described him as the father of Indian unrest and had to write about him: "He appealed to the pride of his Maratha people by raising the cult of Shivaji, the great Maratha chieftain who first raised the standard of Hindu revolt against Mohammedan domination, and he appealed to their religious passions by placing under the patronage of their favourite deities a national movement for boycotting British-imported goods and manufactures, which, under the name of Swadeshi, was to be the first step towards Swaraj. He it was too, who for the first time imported into schools and colleges the ferment of political agitation and presided at bonfires which schoolboys and students

fed with their European text books and European clothes." The mass of people — not Brahmans only — recognised his pioneering work against the foreign enslaver; the working class of Bombay ('non-Brahman', in terms of the author) paid the most glowing tribute to him when it protested in 1908 against his prolonged imprisonment by the British, launched a strike, and confronted the British police and military on the streets of Bombay. This, of course, did not prevent Tilak from giving a Brahman bhojan in Poona a decade later after the end of the Chirol case. And this latter act did not prevent the Bombay working class from gathering in thousands to mourn his passing away in Bombay in 1920.

This was the double-faced intelligentsia of those days. Espousing the aims and interests of the rising bourgeoisie, it attacked the British, but at the same time allied itself with the old feudal order and institutions and explained it as concentrating fire on the foreign enemy first. Its opposition to the anti-moneylender bills was part of its class alliance, not just caste alliance. It defended the peasant only against Government exactions and attacked the land tax and other measures, but till very late in the day it refused to mention agrarian relations in its programme.

Plebian Revolutionary Current

But the intelligentsia and democratic trends were not arising only among the upper caste sections. Down below also there was ferment; and Western education and the new developments were throwing up new leaders and sections who were challenging their own inferior status in the Hindu caste society. Some of them, while framing their democratic demands, could not look beyond their own narrow circle — caste, community—but Jyotiba was of a different mould. He represented the plebian revolutionary current—plebian, because it arose straight from the position of the lower order of Hindu society to which the peasant belonged—and therefore represented a consistent uncompromising application of democratic values and ideology to all spheres of life. His political understanding was the same as that of the other section of the intelligentsia. Like many of his contemporaries, he felt relieved that the 1857 struggle was defeated:

Phule repeated much of the nationalists' economic critique of British rule. Unlike some of the later non-Brahman leaders who maintained an unqualified loyalty to the Raj, he seems to have viewed it as largely destructive in economic terms; it was only on cultural grounds that he saw it as providing a foundation for the liberation of the masses. Thus he linked peasant poverty to the ruin of Indian crafts by unfair competition with British goods, to the disastrous growth of population, to home charges and the expense of foreign military campaigns to the excessive spending on fat salaries for bureaucrats. He described with scorn the decadent life-style of British officials and their neglect of the peasants and noted that even

the common British soldier lived like an aristocrat at the expense of the masses. Like the nationalists, he viewed the 'bureaucracy' as the primary enemy of the peasants—but where he differed from the nationalists was in seeing the bureaucracy as a whole, led at the top by the British but dominated at other levels by the native Brahman elite. In fact one of his major criticisms of the British was that in leading their pleasure-seeking life, they acquiesced in Brahman dominance. In every department—education, irrigation, the judiciary Brahmans were seen as monopolizing the benefits of rule. In particular, the exploitation of the peasants by the incompetent, corrupt judiciary was heavily attacked. While nationalists criticized the 'drain' of income from India to England, Phule and such colleagues of his as Bhalakar directed their attention to the 'drain' from the peasantry to the urbanized bureaucratic elite, and criticised such taxes as the octroi, which provided a major amount of municipal income and the local fund, by means of which largely upper-caste students were educated at the expense of the peasantry (p.118)

Where he sharply differed from the other sections was his uncompromising war on the Hindu social structure. *His championship of untouchables, his ruthless attack on Brahman domination, his exposure of the origin of castes, the Aryan doctrine, his demand for complete equality, his demand that Muslims and Christians be treated on terms of equality, his demand for education for the lowest, and his insistence on equality between men and women, constituted a thorough declaration of war on the old hierarchical order.* This was a far more radical programme for equality and unity than the Lucknow Hindu-Muslim Pact or the Gandhian National Unity Programme. *Although the originator of the programme did not realise it, it could be achieved only by a revolutionary liquidation of the feudal landed relations in India and the colonial rule.* He considered that the main instruments of realising the programme were the spread of education and enlightenment, anti-caste consciousness, and the fight against Brahman domination and against the monopoly of advance under the British rule by the upper castes. It was not accidental that the later day non-Brahman leaders lost their fervour for the programme, because they realised that they could not indulge in the pastime of preaching abolition of castes without changing the land monopoly of the dominant castes and classes in the villages.

Two Trends in the Democratic Revolution

Ideologically Jyotiba's programme was a consistent application of democratic values to Hindu society. In other words, it was an uncompromising attack on the ancient and feudal superstructure based on feudal land relations. Here was the big contrast between the upper-caste intelligentsia and Jyotiba the former allied itself with indigenous reaction and its feudal base and superstructure while attacking the British, the latter

took an uncompromising stand against the superstructure and demanded its demolition. *In somewhat more favourable circumstances, this would have led the latter to challenge the basic agrarian relations.* The compromising and uncompromising trends in a democratic revolution always clash fiercely, as they did here. The participants had their own subjective consciousness of fighting a struggle between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. But deep historical forces were at work and the tendency to compromise with feudalism clashed with the uncompromising trend which manifested itself as wholesale opposition to the caste system and demanded all-round liberation. (The author commits the mistake common with all non-Marxists of judging the development in terms of the subjective consciousness of the participants). With the passage of time and the growing grip of opportunism, the earlier form of anti-Brahman opposition becomes its real content. *Satyashodhak* becomes the non-Brahman movement, resulting in compromise both with feudal relations and imperialism. *The new intelligentsia, nurtured among the non-Brahmans, the product of Western education, gives exact weight, acts as a bourgeois intelligentsia, gives up the pioneer's uncompromising principles, merges inside the Congress to head its ministries, suppresses the people, and keeps the castes in existence. This is a historical law.* The intelligentsia springing, further, from the most oppressed communities sooner or later accepts the framework of bourgeois democracy, satisfies itself with a general declaration of rights, leaving the mass in lurch. No one directed more concentrated fire against the Congress leaders and their hypocrisy than Ambedkar. And yet he was one of the main architects of the Indian Constitution hailed by the Congress till recently as the last word in democracy, and under which the untouchables' houses are burnt, their homes pillaged, their wives raped and they are murdered. No wonder Ambedkar felt himself cheated.

The author does not understand the class process, is unable to view the different trends in terms of the main problems of Indian revolution, this whole process of a nation in the making, as she deals only with ethnic groups and non-Brahmans.

Jedhe and Javalkar

Her discussion of Jedhe and Javalkar, the role they were playing together and the differentiation between them, is illuminating and yet she fails to draw important conclusions. Jedhe and Javalkar, the acknowledged leaders of the non-Brahman movement, both joined the national anti-imperialist movement led by the Congress, fed up with the pro-British policies of other non-Brahman leaders. Apart from the restlessness of the peasant masses, both were feeling the anti-imperialist patriotic urge. They tried to combine their radical anti-casteism with the anti-British struggle. From non-Brahman leaders, they became national leaders. And they now had to part company. Joining the Congress

meant verbal pyrotechnics against caste and accommodation to caste in practice. Jedhe was satisfied with it; like the rest of the intelligentsia, he adopted a compromising attitude on the question, which in reality meant a compromise on the question of agrarian relations.

But Javalkar, that restless mind, would not. To turn to non-Brahmanism after the 1930 struggle was impossible. To go forward meant he must take on an uncompromising position on every issue—caste, capitalism, imperialism—and combine the anti-caste struggle with a direct championing of the peasant and the anti-imperialist struggle. In reality, this was the destination, the fulfilment, of Jyotiba's rebellion, which neither Gandhi nor any nationalist leader was capable of. Only the working class, or those remaining loyal to the peasant, could do it. Javalkar talked of a peasant raj, against capitalism; of independent peasant organisation; of the Russian Revolution; and a non-violent peasant army.

Repeatedly, this conflict has arisen in the course of the national struggle—the conflict against compromise with feudal reaction and also with imperialism. Those leaders who were absorbed in the intelligentsia accepted the compromise, those who consistently remained loyal to the masses were logically led to support the agrarian movement and later on the working class movement.

Communist and Non-Brahman Movements

The chapter on the Communists and non-Brahmans is written without the minimum attempt to gather facts. It was a public matter that by that time the non-Brahman leaders, in Bombay at least, had taken an openly anti-Communist position under the plea of fighting Brahman leadership. It was not known to the public that some of them privately celebrated the arrest of Communists in the Meerut Conspiracy case. It was also public knowledge that an open attempt was made to split the GKKU because the hammer and sickle was inscribed on the badges of union volunteers. Is it laziness or just reliance only on non-Brahman sources?

Certain other facts must also be noted. The non-Brahman leaders in Bombay had taken the position of openly supporting the British and the Simon Commission, and described the working class protest against the Commission as exploitation by Brahman leaders. The clash came at a time when the non-Brahman movement was revealing its reactionary features. It should also be remembered that in the early pioneering days of building the radical trade union movement, the main attack of the anti-Communist force was delivered through the non-Brahman leaders of Bombay and it had to be counteracted.

A victim of the caste theory, a victim of the elite theory, the author persists in calling the leaders Brahmans and their imaginary or real mistakes are traced to their caste origin. It would be as bad if we

were to treat her errors about us as due to the influence of PL 480 funds!

But from where does she get the idea that the Communists were opposed to mill committees or afraid of them? The fact is that it is the communist leadership which established mill committees in all the textile mills in pursuance of its aim to develop rank and file leadership. The establishment of these committees figured as a charge and evidence in the Meerut Conspiracy case. It is known that the 1929 strike was forced on the union and its leaders because of victimisation of the mill committees and the leaders did their best to protect them. The entire testimony of the leaders before the Court of Inquiry shows how they defended them. But the author has no compunction in accepting anything about the Communists if it fits in with the Brahman elite theory. For anti-Communist judgements, any foreign author and any anti-communist leader is good enough. While the author glosses over the enormity of the non-Brahman leaders' collaboration with the British, their support to the Simon Commission, she easily quotes some of them to describe the Communists as "Brahman Communists." She does not even ponder to think that in most cases the attack was made because the Communists refused to subordinate the anti-imperialist struggle to the demands of caste politics. The Communists were scoring successes with the same masses which the caste leaders wanted to tackle; they were drawing them into the anti-imperialist struggle which the collaborating leaders wanted to denigrate. Gail Omvedt's failure to relate all the movements to the basic movements of the Indian masses against the colonial order again and again makes her accept the narrow outlook of some of the collaborating non-Brahman leaders.

And then she carries this Brahman analysis business to farcical length. One of the reasons why the Communists in Andhra made spectacular advance was because the main leaders including Sundarayya, were non-Brahmans, Sundarayya is described as a Reddy; in Kerala, E M S Namboodiripad was matched by AK Gopalan, who is described as an Ezhava! The Andhra Communists emerged out of the non-Brahman movement and not out of the anti-imperialists movement! Then they lapsed in "Kulak Communism". The Communists are again charged with not giving satisfactory support to the RIN Mutiny, while the fact that they called a huge general strike in support is deliberately suppressed. The fact is that the Communists were in constant touch with the RIN rebels and they alone stood by them and had the courage to call a general strike and bring the workers in the streets. Truth seems to be of no value when Communists are to be criticised. What else can one expect from a book which is only a slightly revised version of a thesis accepted by California University?

The Communist Party and movement had its own shortcomings, faults and deviations and this is not the place to discuss them. When

the author discusses why the movement developed in some States and not in Bombay she should have made a deeper analysis, instead of juggling with the categories of Brahman and non Brahman elite. The Communists everywhere arose out of the anti-imperialist struggle and where they were able to attract or combine with other democratic currents—left democrats from the Congress, the State people's movement and anti-caste agitations and peasant movements—they were able to broaden their base. The process of absorption of these currents was a process of mutual approach, a correct approach on the part of the Communists and a radical anti-imperialist approach on part of the anti-caste movement. In Kerala especially, this took place on a big scale and the movement went ahead. In Andhra, the Communists took up these questions. In Maharashtra, as we have seen, it was only Javalkar who was developing on a radical basis and his activities would have led to a proper amalgamation of the two currents.

Revisionist Theory

The failure to relate the flow and ebb of the non-Brahman movement to the development of the national struggle, to the formation process of the nation and the rise of new classes, is inevitable because the author rejects the Marxist-Leninist understanding of colonialism and bases herself on new revisions in understanding. A sly revision of Marxism-Leninism has been going on in the name of discovering a separate colonial mode of production. The author swallows this revisionist outlook and comes to grief. The other reason is, of course, reliance on Fabian guidance.

There is no doubt that with the domination of colonial powers, and the growing linking of the colonies with the capitalist world market, certain changes began to take place in the pre-capitalist, feudal or ancient economic relations in the colonies. For a long time the process was minimal, especially till the arrival of the national industrial bourgeoisie on the scene. In the main, imperialism based itself on and exploited the pre-capitalist relations for its own purpose, modifying them to the minimum extent. The colonial domination acted as an obstruction to industrial development by its exploitation of the pre-capitalist relation. In spite of its obstruction, certain industrial developments began to take place in various countries which led to a conflict between the colonial power and the national bourgeoisie. The extent of this development varied from country to country. It could not, of course, be that the old precapitalist order could continue exactly as it was, or that the old feudal or semi-feudal relations could remain exactly in their pre-colonial form. However, by and large, both during the course of the liberation struggle and after the liberation struggle, the people had to devote their attention to the liquidation of these relations before they could unleash the productive forces of their country.

The discoverers of a new colonial mode of production, which is supposed to apply to all colonies, while assessing the changes brought about by colonial rule exaggerate the character of the change and in the bargain embellish imperialism. Read the following from the book: "As we have argued in Chapter 2, the basic colonial landlord power in a colonial agrarian structure is capitalist and not semi-capitalist, the primary basis of landlord power in a colonial society is a capitalist market economy and legal and property relations, and both poor peasants and agricultural labourers (making up a majority in most cases of the rural population) get a primary part of their income from basically wage labour and thus are at least semi-proletarians" (p.301). So, from the early 19th century (Jyotiba's time) feudal relations on land have been abolished and the capitalist market has captured the agrarian countryside: The colonial power abolished feudal relations on land—can there be a bigger tribute to imperialism?

It is this non-Marxist-Leninist understanding that makes the author say at another place, "it (colonial society) disrupted thoroughly the basis by which old social structures and values had been maintained." There has been a persistent attempt of late to denigrate the anti-imperialist freedom movement, and present imperialist rule as a progressive enlightening force. L Collins, and D Lapiere's "Freedom at Midnight" is one instance. The author slips into this eulogy of British imperialism, a fruit of the false theory of "plural society."

It is notorious that the British relied on the feudal princes, big feudal landlords, and the maintenance of feudal subservient relations of land. This was all the more dominant during Jyotiba's days. But the Rajas, nobles, chieftains, though they continued to exploit the peasantry in the feudal way, are declared to be part of the commercial bourgeoisie because, it seems, they did not perform a political function. Both the facts and arguments are wrong. The author considers that Jyotiba also belonged to this commercial bourgeois class, which includes rajas, and so on. To say that after a quarter or half a century of British rule, the feudal relations on one hand were not the same as they were is correct. To say that the basic agrarian system was capitalist under British rule is just absurd.

It is this wrong understanding—that feudalism survives (since the early days of colonial rule) in terms only of its cultural forms which leads to the conclusion that Jyotiba's revolt was just a cultural revolt and not directly connected with the agrarian relations then obtaining. This makes it easier to present it as a conflict between ethnic groups. The understanding of the colonial class structure, as presented by the author under this theory ignores the role of the rising national bourgeoisie in a country like India, of its spokesmen, the intelligentsia, who led India due to the weakness of the proletariat.

Conclusion

To conclude: the non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra, originally known as the *Satyashodhak* movement, had a much wider significance than the subsequent anti-caste movements. It was a consistent application of democratic norms and values to the entire Hindu social structure. It demanded, further, equality for Muslims and Christians, attacked the many gods to replace them by one god. It was in these days a liberation challenge to the entire caste superstructure based on feudal and semi-feudal, pre-capitalist land relations, it would have been successful only with the abolition of basic land relations and the colonial order. It was a consistent democratic trend arising from the midst of the lower order, the peasant castes, and led by a democratic intelligentsia. It violently clashed with the other current led by the intelligentsia springing from the upper castes, Brahmans who, while taking an anti-British stand, pursued a conciliatory or justificatory attitude towards the caste-superstructure. It foreshadowed later conflicts, when the bourgeois nationalist leaders were to clash with leaders from the working class and the peasantry over the question of the peasant problems, or the agrarian revolution. Subsequently, the non-Brahman movement lost this wide perspective of thoroughgoing attack on the old superstructure, and like the earlier upper caste intelligentsia, took a compromising stand on the question of abolition of castes. While mouthing the earlier ideology and condemning the Brahmans, the leading figures strayed into securing an upper caste status for this or that caste in place of destruction of the caste system. This deterioration in outlook further led to a race for seeking patronage and office under the British in the name of fighting Brahman monopoly, and temporarily ended in collaborating with the British against the first big national upsurge. The British played a role in side-tracking the movement.

But the democratic traditions of the earlier anti-caste struggle were not dead. The criticism of caste domination even now had a valid democratic content. Besides, the peasant mass with whom the movement was linked was being strongly influenced by the national movement. The leaders themselves were feeling this nationalist urge-the sense of national unity. They merged with the Congress to join the 1930 movement. This coming together of the two currents was inevitable with the strong appeal of nationalism to the peasant masses under the compromising national bourgeois leadership of the Congress. The independent destiny of the movement on the basis of Jyotiba's principles of an uncompromising attitude to the superstructure, combined with an equally radical policy towards imperialism and agrarian relations, could not be fulfilled.

However, Javalkar tried to carry out this fulfillment, attempting to combine the anti-caste movement with a radical peasant movement and

anti-capitalist outlook, and came very near the working class ideology. But unfortunately, he died early. This was really the logical destination of the earlier movement which could have been fulfilled if the working class movement had been mature enough.

All this was really *a process of various sections of Indian society awakening to their immediate surroundings and, gradually, by devious ways, finding their way into the common stream against imperialism, for freedom and democracy.* Many were left out but *the process was the major development of the entire period.* During its course the intelligentsia steeped in bourgeois values, often connected with landed interests also, was rising from various sources, castes and communities and gradually merging together to take a common stand against the masses—on the question of agrarian revolution of abolition of castes and untouchability, on the question of working class and capitalism, of anti-imperialist democratic revolution. That is why we find these mergers alliances, and so on at the top, with the masses left in lurch. The process of colonial exploitation at the same time was leading to the formation of new classes at the bottom, the working class, the agricultural workers and a pauperised peasantry—creating a common danger for all vested interests. The non-Brahman movement, its growth and fall cannot be understood in isolation from this process, and out of the context of the struggle against the colonial order. The author with her many non-class ideas about plural society, elitist conflicts and colonial structure reduces this process to group conflicts, fails to notice the new classes—the industrial bourgeoisie and their spokesmen arising from the struggle—divorces the understanding of the movement from its connection with basic feudal and semi-feudal agrarian relations, and is unable to explain why the cultural revolution should merge in the Congress. She underestimates the urge of the national patriotic struggle and accepts the reasoning on many occasions of the non-Brahman leaders who stayed away from the correct path to collaborate with the British.

Her remarks and estimates on the Communist movement and its failures and successes are mainly based on the opinions of those who always attacked the Communists and also bypasses facts. In spite of this, the author has made several penetrating observations on the non-Brahman movement, understood its phases, and drawn correct comparisons between its various leaders. She has, further, given the biographical sketches of the earlier leaders which show how these men coming from the common stock rose to great heights in unfurling the banner of rebellion against the Brahman dominated society.

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CONTRIBUTORS

SANDHYA BARUA is a research scholar at the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

BIPLAB DASGUPTA is Visiting Professor at the Department of Economics, Jadavpur University.

MRIDUL EAPEN is Research Associate at the Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

FRANCOIS HOUTART is the Director, Tricontinental Centre, Belgium.

GENEVIEVE LEMERCINIER is with the Tricontinental Centre, Belgium.

JOAN MENCHER is Professor of Anthropology at the Graduate School and University Centre of the City University of New York.

BONAVENTURE SWAI teaches at the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

MOHAN THAMPI is Associate Editor of the Social Scientist.

BIPLAB DASGUPTA

The Naxalite Movement - An Epilogue

FOR two major reasons it has been necessary to write again on the Naxalite Movement almost four years after the first publication of the book *The Naxalite Movement*.¹ First, the need to take into account the new documents and facts about the first five stormy years of the movement. The material for the book was collected during 1970-71 at a time when the movement was passing through its most explosive, violent and critical phase which ended in its ruthless suppression by the government. Given the character of the movement, its mode of functioning and the trying conditions under which it was operating at the time, there was obviously a limit to the scope for research in this field. Second, the urgent need to update the data. Since the death of Mazūmdar, the movement has taken a new turn; and whether the Naxalism of today is a continuation of the movement led by Mazumdar or not, the fact remains that it has established itself as an important trend within the left-wing movement of the country. It is important to ask why this trend persists, despite the fact that Naxalism stands for different things to different factions, despite their lack of unity and organization, and despite the ideological confusion in their ranks due to splits and twists and turns in Chinese politics. And why, even after the harrowing experience of 1967-72, some of them continue to follow doggedly and

uncompromisingly the Mazumdar line of annihilation which has by now been repudiated by the vast majority of the Naxalites? Irrespective of whether one agrees with the Naxalites or not, the Marxists of India cannot avoid the task of studying this trend, its past and present as well as its future possibilities, and of drawing their own conclusions from these.

Charu Mazumdar

We begin with an evaluation of the role of Charu Mazumdar; but not with a view to personify the entire movement. Mazumdar as a private person does not interest us; his attitudes, whims, habits and prejudices which do not have any impact on public life are not our concern. Whether he was a saint, a rogue or a crank, whether he was a teetotaler or an alcoholic and drug-addict, and whether his commitment to instant revolution was genuine or a ploy to make his mark in history with Chinese support, all these are trivial compared to the objective role he played in Indian politics. History has shown that it is just as possible for a self-sacrificing idealist to play into the hands of the reactionaries as it is for a person with a less than perfect personal life to play a progressive role.

We are interested in Mazumdar's political role, because of his place in the movement. Mazumdar initiated Naxalism long before Naxalbari, he acted as the main source of inspiration behind Srikakulam and other attempted armed revolts led by the Naxalites, and firmly controlled the party organization until his death. He was the father figure of the movement, a replica of Chairman Mao on an Indian scale. In the words of one of his admirers and trusted comrades, Saroj Dutta, "The history of India has given Charu Mazumdar the role to carry out the historic task (of conducting socialist revolution). In the present situation Charu Mazumdar is CPI (ML)."² Mazumdar was the 'revolutionary authority'; his talks and comments became the 'party line', and not to accept his leadership unconditionally amounted to defying the party.³ "With the death of Mazumdar a particular phase in the movement ended. Naxalism implied not only a call for immediate armed struggle and devotion to the Chinese path, but also the annihilation theory, the rejection of a united front, mass organizations and mass activities and urban guerilla activities among others. All these carried the personal mark of Mazumdar. Without these policies and without Mazumdar, Naxalism could not have been what it was in 1967-72."⁴

Because Mazumdar meant so much to Naxalism and the Naxalites, it was inevitable that he would become the principal target of attack with the failure of the movement. The criticism related to both the way he ran the party organisation (for example, see the criticism by the Satyanarayan Singh group of his establishment of 'personal regime', which they considered as "perverse and alien to Marxist-Leninist norms

of party organization")⁵ and the ideologies he preached. By now all but three of the Naxalite factions have repudiated what they describe as 'Charuism', the strongest criticism coming from the SNS group in the following words: "We cannot and must not unite with those who uphold and practise the ultra 'left' line of Charu Mazumdar, that is, the line of individual terrorism, the line of boycott and opposition to mass struggles, the line of armed struggle without the party, without the people and without politics, whether they call themselves anti-Lin or pro-Lin factions."⁶ The SNS group has also rejected his assessment about the prospects of revolution in India: while victory is absolutely certain, according to this group it is not going to be a "smooth walk over", and the Indian revolution would have to "traverse a tortuous and protracted course and there will be no easy and quick victory."⁷ Again, while "an excellent revolutionary situation is existing and growing in India today", the group contended, "it would be wrong to conclude that all the people are ready for armed struggle all over the country".⁸ Mazumdar's two other formulations, that the entire bourgeoisie in India was 'comprador' and the entire section of the rich peasantry were feudal in nature have also been heavily criticised as being too simplistic.⁹

On the other side of this intra-Naxalite debate, the pro-Charu Mazumdar groups argue that the setback in the movement was not due to any failing on the part of Mazumdar as the party's leader and theoretician, but to the faulty application of his preachings by the local leadership. They point out that even the Communist movement in China suffered many setbacks under the leadership of Mao: not only various types of right and left deviations occurred, but the situation even reached a stage where Mao himself had to ask the party cadres to "bombard the (party) headquarters".¹⁰ They cite several letters of Charu Mazumdar which purport to show that he often tried to correct the excesses which were being committed by the party cadres in the implementation of the annihilation line. In one such letter he wrote: "Not all the officers are our enemies—only the corrupt and anti-people officers should be the targets of our attack." (18-11-1971).¹¹ And in another letter he stated, "We should remember that not all businessmen are our enemies. On the contrary after an area has been liberated some of these businessmen would contact us in their own interests." (13-12-1970).¹² This last statement, however, would be seen by many as confirming that in the 'liberated areas' of Calcutta, the businessmen used the Naxalites to keep the CPI(M) trade unionists and their sympathisers out of their work places. ^

It is clear that the role of Mazumdar will continue as a major subject of debate among the Naxalites for many years to come. This is natural, expected and healthy, given his importance in the history of the movement. But what is surprising, more than the hero-worship of the pro-CM factions, is the tendency among others to make Mazumdar the

scapegoat for all the failings of the movement until his death.¹³ One searches Naxalite literature in vain for a thorough, indepth and objective analysis of the factors which led to the growth of 'Charuism'. While personal abuse is understandable, coming as it does from those who for most of the time kept quiet when these mistakes were being committed, this is no substitute for hard thinking to identify the causes behind both the Naxalism of the form dominant during the first five years and the meteoric rise of Charu Mazumdar from obscurity to banner headlines. Without an intense self-criticism, and a scientific non-dogmatic approach, there is no guarantee that such mistakes will not be repeated again.

The Significance of Chinese Support

One question to ask would be, to what extent their criticism of Mazumdar is sincere and based on an understanding of present-day Indian reality and whether such criticism has been prompted by the rejection of the Mazumdar line by the Chinese party itself.¹⁴

We examined in the book how the support of the Chinese party to the Naxalite Movement explains both its success and the impact it made within a short time and also its eventual disintegration and destruction. Mazumdar's prestige in the movement was a derived one; which followed the recognition by the Chinese party of his leadership, their publication of two of Mazumdar's articles in 'Peking Review', and the worldwide publicity given to his statements and speeches by the network of Chinese embassies, news agencies, and pro-Chinese groups. All these made Mazumdar "the great leader of the Indian revolution" overnight, and brought further recognition from the Naxalites within the country. This explains why Nagi Reddy, a figure many times more influential than Mazumdar in the parent party, was unable to build his organization, while Mazumdar, with the blessings of the Chinese party, rose to become the father figure of the movement from the position of a dedicated small-time mofussil party functionary.

It is true that some Naxalites—for example, Nagi Reddy, Asit Sen, Parimal Dasgupta, and Sushital Roychoudhuri—began criticising Mazumdar's policies long before the Chinese abandoned their support for him;¹⁵ but for the majority of the anti-CM Naxalites (and this includes Singh) it is doubtful whether a strong statement from the Chinese party during 1970-71 in support of Mazumdar's leadership would not have muted their criticism. Even today, ignoring the pro-CM groups who are either supporting the Albanian party in its ideological fight against the CPC, or are critical of the anti-Lin Piao and the anti-'gang of four' stand of the present Chinese leadership, the vast majority of Naxalite factions tend to align themselves uncritically with the Chinese party in the name of internationalism.

Generalising the Chinese Experience

With the prestige invested in him by the Chinese party, Mazumdar interpreted happenings in India in terms of the corresponding experience of the Chinese party in their years of revolutionary war. "The uprising in Srikakulam was compared to Yen'an, and the attacks on educational institutions in Calcutta in 1970 to the May 4, 1919 movement of students in China. The annihilation of class enemies campaign was compared to the war of annihilation launched by the Chinese party in the Sino-Japanese war. Everything in India would stand or fall according to its relevance to the Chinese experience."¹⁶ The class analysis of Indian society of the late sixties almost exactly matched the analysis of China in the thirties. The ruling class of India was supposed to be 'comprador', having no roots among the Indian people; the people of India were supposed to be ready for revolution. And in this situation to follow any programme which was not directly related to the capture of state power—including work in mass organizations—amounted to 'revisionism' or 'economism' in the eyes of Mazumdar, who modelled the programme of his party on the famous Peoples Daily article 'Spring Thunder Breaks over India'. In his class analysis and the assessment of the prospect for revolution in India, and also in the theory of the encirclement of towns by red bases, Mazumdar was completely faithful to the Chinese interpretation of the Indian situation; while his theory of annihilation, his move into the town in 1970 by abandoning the countryside, and the rejection of mass organizations and united fronts, were seen by him as being a 'creative application' of Maoism to Indian conditions.

Even today the vast majority of the Naxalites continue to be loyal to the current leadership of China, as they have always been, and support the two superpower hegemony hypothesis of CPC with Soviet 'social imperialism' being identified as the more dangerous of the two. However, these days references to China are no longer associated with the kind of enthusiasm, superlative expressions, and exaggerations which characterised Naxalite literature until the death of Mazumdar. The recently published statements of the CPI (ML) led by Satyanarayan Singh even went to the extent of listing both 'similarities' and 'dissimilarities' between the Chinese and the Indian conditions.¹⁷ In one article on the death of Mao, a major criticism by the Andhra Naxalite group, UCCRI of the Indian Communist Movement was that:

Communists in India were almost entirely without any independence of thought. A high degree of dependence manifested itself from the very start so that the wrong lines from the internationalist movement had a disproportionate impact on the movement. From the beginning the Indian communists were dependent on outsiders. At first it was M N Roy and the CPGB. Then mechanically applying what

they were told, Joshi followed the Zinoviev-Kamanev-Rykov line, Ranadive the Tito line, Ajoy Ghosh the Khrushchev line, the CPI (M) the Liu Shao-Chi line and the CPI(ML) under Charu Mazumdar the Lin Piao line. Just as the leaders depended on outsiders, so they encouraged their cadres to depend on them. The cadres were told to follow what the leaders said, not to waste time reading too much, and to worry about discussion, but simply follow the guidelines and policies that came from above.¹⁶

By implication this paragraph criticises the Chinese line of the 1967-72 period—which was transmitted to India through Charu Mazumdar—in whose formulation Lin Piao, the most important figure in Chinese politics after Mao at the time, played an important role. This is a welcome sign, but what is not clear is whether this is simply a factional statement to repudiate Lin-Charu, or whether it indicates an assertion of independence on the part of the Nagi Reddy group vis-a-vis the Chinese party. In any case, as long as the Naxalites in India remain more responsive to the factional politics in China than the political reality in the country where they are operating, and fail to apply their own mind to an understanding of the Indian situation, the possibility of deviations like those committed by Mazumdar occurring again would remain wide open.

'Charuism' Prior to Naxalbari

To complete our understanding of Charu Mazumdar we need to study a set of eight important documents written by Mazumdar and circulated under a pseudonym within the CPI (M) during 1965-67, that is before Naxalbari, when he was a member of CPI (M) and a leading party functionary in North Bengal.¹⁷ These documents very clearly reveal the ideological consistency of Mazumdar on major issues, as the following summary will show:

i) On the annihilation of individual class enemies, in the book the impression was given that the annihilation campaign was launched in Srikakulam rather spontaneously by certain members, and the approval of the leadership came subsequently.¹⁸ These documents show that annihilation or *khatam* was very much in Mazumdar's mind even before Naxalbari was launched. For example, in the fifth document, written in 1965, he said, after a passionate call for armed resistance by the masses against repression, that attacks on government cars, buses, trains and so on were not enough: "Revolutionaries need to give conscious leadership to attack the hated bureaucrats, police officials and military officers. People need to be taught that repression is not done by the police station but by the inspector of the *thana*, repression is not conducted by the government houses or cars, but by the people in charge of government coercive instruments and our attack should be against these people." Thus the emphasis was on the *individuals* in charge of the

repressive machinery of the government. Furthermore, "Workers and revolutionary people should be taught to attack; *not to hurt, but to annihilate*. If the enemy is only wounded, the reaction would be to take revenge, while annihilation will strike fear among those responsible for repression" emphasis added). The sixth document, written on August 30, 1966 includes 'class enemies' among the targets of annihilation.

ii) A puzzling aspect of the Naxalite activities in Naxalbari, Dobra, Gopiballavpore, Mushahari, Srikakulam and other places was that these were not properly coordinated and were not parts of a strategic plan for the seizure of power in the whole country. In fact in none of these areas could there ever be any hope of sustained struggle for an indefinite period of time. Naxalbari, for example, is well connected with the national highway system and is accessible to one of the largest military concentrations in North Bengal, while in terms of political support its neighbouring areas were among the worst in the state. One reason for this was the Naxalite faith that the people of India were ready for revolution, and that what was needed was a 'spark' to begin a 'prairie fire'. These documents show Mazumdar's faith in 'locally based armed struggles', which would eventually spread to the rest of the country. In the last document which was published in April 1967, Mazumdar spoke of the need to destroy the state machinery and to work for agrarian revolution, and stated, "if this cannot be done in the whole country, it should be done locally." In the second document he attributed the failure of the party during the Tebhaga struggle of the forties in Bengal to their aspiration to capture the 'centre' when a locally-based struggle was necessary.

iii) The documents also confirm that Mazumdar had lost faith in the CPI (M) leadership long before Naxalbari, and that he was appealing to members for the overthrow of the leadership long before any kind of disciplinary action was taken against him. In the earlier documents the attack was indirect, and by way of hints, but in the latter ones the leadership was attacked directly and unambiguously. For example, in the third document he simply stated that the party did not fully understand the implications of the 1949 Chinese revolution, and that the rejection of the 'Chinese path' in the name of following a 'purely Indian path' was going to lead to revisionism. There was no alternative to armed struggle and the party should take up the programme of liberating peasants through agrarian revolts. In the fifth document Mazumdar said that so far the Party's response to repression had been passive resistance when an active resistance and a 'tit-for-tat' struggle was called for to combat frustration in the party ranks. By the time he wrote the sixth document in August 1966, Mazumdar was shocked at the non-acceptance of the Chinese position by the CPI (M), and concluded: "By opposing the Chinese path the Indian leadership has abandoned the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary path, and are trying to sell revisionism in a new bottle. So the party comrades should clearly understand that

in the struggle against revisionism this party leadership is not our comrade, not even our ally.... (In this situation) to adhere to the so-called party 'form' or constitutional structure is to accept inaction and collaboration with the revisionist leadership."

iv) Mazumdar's position on the role of mass organizations before and after Naxalbari also shows a high degree of consistency. One of his complaints against the CPI (M) party leadership was that it made work in the trade unions and kisan sabhas the main base of work of the party cadres, which encouraged 'economism', political inaction, revisionism, and dominance of the party by the individuals who are prominent in mass activities. In contrast, Mazumdar's recipe was to make the agrarian revolution the main task of the party and to build a party which reflected this orientation. While partial struggles were not ruled out completely (see the eighth document), this could only be justified in terms of conditions prevailing in a specific situation, given the diversity and the uneven development of the country. In general, work in the mass organisation was viewed as being competitive with the task of building a revolutionary party organisation.

An Outline of the Post-Mazumdar Movement

The post-Mazumdar period (1972-78) can be divided into three phases: the pre-emergency period, the period during the emergency, and the post-emergency period.

In the first phase, four major issues dominated Naxalite thinking. The first was the need to fight 'Charuism', and replace it by a body of ideas which was more in keeping with the objective conditions prevailing in the country. While the Chinese revolutionary experience was considered more relevant to India than the experience of the other socialist countries, there was now a clear recognition in the documents produced by the SNS group, the largest Naxalite group in the country, that there also existed many 'dissimilarities' between pre-1949 China and today's India which could not be ignored.²¹ The similarities were in the size, mode of production with more than 80 percent working in the rural sector, and in the semi-colonial, semi-feudal rule prevailing in the country. On the other hand, India's industries are more developed, the working class larger and 'bound to play a greater role' in the Indian revolution, capitalism stronger even in agriculture; and unlike China, the transport network is more widely spread, and the phenomenon of feuding large warlords, each having his own army and controlling its own territory is conspicuous by its absence. Some other negative factors, such as the limited role of the Indian communists in the national liberation movement, the existence of an ongoing parliamentary system, the division of the population among many nationalities, and the fact that "the influence of CPI (ML) over the working class is limited and confined to a few centres", were cited in their documents, along with

the existence of a 'favourable' international situation. There was a clear admission that revolution could not be a 'walk over' in the Indian context. Following from this was now the emphasis on partial struggles to raise the level of political consciousness which would earlier have been dubbed as 'economism': work among the landless, the poor, and the middle peasantry, preaching the politics of the party, and seizing landlords' land and crops and their distribution among the less privileged.

On annihilation there was initially some hesitation to make a clean break with the past policies. Even as late as in June 1974, the extended central committee of CPI (ML) led by Singh was unwilling to categorically oppose annihilation. Its programme talked of 'punishing' landlords, usurers, local bullies and corrupt officials, without taking a position on whether the punishment could under some circumstances take the form of annihilation.²² It took another year till the April 1975 meeting of the central committee, to declare that the annihilation of the class enemy alienates people and should be rejected as a policy.²³

On the question of participation in elections the previous stand of non-participation was maintained. In its April 1975 meeting the group led by Singh stated explicitly: "There exists a revolutionary upsurge in the struggle of the Indian people, an upsurge which is far deeper and higher than the country has ever witnessed. Under these concrete conditions of our country, the CPI (ML) holds that the question of participation in parliamentary elections is no longer a question of tactics. The party maintains that any participation in parliamentary elections would divert the people from the path of armed struggle."²⁴ The path of armed struggle was not abandoned, and found useful, if not for the immediate seizure of power, for localised application wherever conditions were favourable. The 'protracted' nature of the struggle was admitted, as also the need to 'patiently work among the people' in areas where the popular consciousness had not reached a level adequate for launching such struggles.

The second set of issues on which the Naxalites were largely divided in this period, were those relating to international politics. With regard to the understanding of events in China there were differences between those who thought that Lin Piao was a true revolutionary and a victim of a revisionist conspiracy which had misled Mao, and those who adopted the official version of the Chinese party that Lin was guilty of 'left deviation' and had attempted to murder Mao. The former group was led among others by Mahadev Mukherjee, an ex-CPI(M) activist from the Burdwan district of West Bengal. Another area of difference was the characterisation of the Bangladesh liberation struggle: while some took the view that this was a fake struggle which was being manipulated by the Indian expansionists to annex a part of Pakistan, some others shared the understanding of Mohammod Toaha of the East

Pakistan Communist Party (Marxist Leninist) and Charu Mazumdar that while the leadership of Mujibur Rahman was bankrupt and being controlled by India, the aspiration of the Bangladesh people for liberation from Pakistani occupation was a genuine one which should have been supported.²⁵

Finally, there were differences on the attitude to be adopted towards the 1974-75 mass movement guided by Jayaprakash Narayan which eventually led to the imposition of the emergency rule in the country. Singh's strong support for JP's movement in Bihar and elsewhere was criticised by the other Naxalite groups on the ground that it was being led by a bourgeois reformist with American support. Singh countered this with the argument, "the practical implication of their thesis is that the party should have remained aloof from the peoples' movement in Bihar as the American lobby too was present in it." He also pointed to the growing contradiction between the two superpowers, and reminded the critics that of the two, "Soviet social imperialism" was a bigger menace.²⁶

Besides these differences on matters of principle, there were also substantial differences on the question of party organization. By 1972 the Naxalites had been split into many factions. Whenever attempts were made to unify the movement and 'unity' or 'coordination' committees were set up for that purpose some issues cropped up which divided them up again. In most instances the division was based on no more than an alternative evaluation of the role of various individuals in the brief history of the movement.

A Movement, but not a Party

Individually, none of the groups functioned as a party guided by the principle of democratic centralism. In the book it was pointed out that Naxalism remained a movement and failed to create a 'party'. Although the CPI (ML) was formally set up in April 1969, the central committee never met to form policies and to take organizational decisions; these were left to Mazumdar. In mid-1970 the party organisation was 'decentralised', and each unit was given the 'full democratic right' to plan and execute its operations without guidance from the top.²⁷ The failure to form a party in the proper sense was partly due to its reliance on spontaneity, and partly to its cadre composition, many of the cadres being drawn from fringe groups—like antisocials, school dropouts and elite students—and not from the classes which are traditionally associated with the Marxist movement such as the working class or the peasantry (except a section of tribals), or even the salaried middle class. There was not much improvement in the situation after Mazumdar's death. The central committee of the CPI (ML) led by Singh also failed to meet regularly, and despite its criticism of the establishment of a personal regime by Mazumdar, its policies and pro-

grammes were mainly shaped by its leader. In its functioning this group faced challenges from both the 'right' and the 'left'. The 'right' was in favour of a policy of 'lying low' for some time; some of their spokesmen including R N Upadhaya, Mahendra Singh and Shiv Kumar Mishra, even spoke for organizing the party on a 'democratic' basis under the conditions, and opposed the centralisation of the party apparatus. The 'left' on the other hand was critical of the failure of the party to give leadership to armed struggle, and was criticised in its turn by the central committee for being 'a body of idle romantics' at a time when there were 'very few armed squads' under the leadership of the party. These differences within the group eventually brought the central leadership in direct confrontation with three of the principal state units—Bengal, Bihar and Orissa—and led to several expulsions.²⁸

Naxalism under the Emergency

The second phase of interest to us is the period under emergency rule. The immediate reaction to the emergency of the CPI (ML) led by Singh was to make the task of overthrowing the 'fascist' regime the principal one, and in implementing it this group expressed its preparedness to join hands with all those who were opposed to the regime. The 'united front' this group proposed even included 'patriotic capitalists', in addition to workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie.²⁹ In December 1975 this group, along with three other Naxalite groups—the Central Organising Committee of the CPI (ML), the United Committee of the Communist Revolutionaries of India, and the Communist Unity Committee (ML)—formed an All India Joint Action Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, which made an appeal for a broadbased united front which would include "all classes, strata, organisations, parties, groups and individuals opposed to fascist Indira ruling clique, the lackey of Soviet social imperialism."³⁰

In practice, however, it was found difficult to maintain unity among the four groups who came together in this committee. Differences arose between the CPI (ML) led by Singh and the COC on the interpretation of the 'emergency' and on the kind of united front needed under the prevailing Indian conditions. The COC now took the view that the Indira regime was not 'fascist', since fascism could not grow out of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial condition; the 'emergency' had the effect of merely intensifying repression rather than producing a qualitative change in the political scene. From this it concluded that the united front necessary today was the one which would help the cause of socialist revolution. The Singh group considered this approach as one of 'left deviation' which failed to take into account the contradictions within the ruling class. What was more important than the content of the very elaborate discussion on this subject, was the manner in which it was conducted which was hardly in keeping with the agreement they reached in

December 1975.⁸¹ Differences also arose with the UCCRI on the same subject; again the discussion began as a critique of the latter's policy of 'equidistance' between the two ruling class groups fighting for power, but very soon degenerated into mud slinging and personal abuse.

The Release of Political Prisoners

In the third phase, that is in the period after the emergency, a number of issues dominated intra-Naxalite discussion. First, the issue of the release of political prisoners. Soon after the March 1977 election, which led to the defeat of Indira Gandhi, a meeting was arranged among the same four groups to work out a joint approach on this issue. However, according to the other three groups, soon afterwards Singh unilaterally came out with a press statement, on April 10, 1977, which expressed support for the Janata government and then negotiated with Charan Singh, the Home Minister of the Janata government, the terms for the 'conditional release' of Naxalite prisoners⁸². In the press statement of April 10, 1977, Singh stated, "We wish to state categorically here that violence is not our ideology. Our ideology is Marxism-Leninism." Furthermore, "The CPI (ML) has decided to offer critical support to the present government; it has decided to support all the policies and measures which are patriotic and democratic, and oppose all of those which are not, both in the sphere of internal and external affairs."⁸³ The terms he worked out with Charan Singh contained the following points:

- i) Release of all MISA detenus.
- ii) Release of undertrial Naxalite prisoners who had been in jail for more than five years, provided they made a statement supporting Singh's statement of April 10, 1977, and the resolution on similar lines passed by the central committee of CPI (ML) led by Singh.
- iii) Release of undertrial prisoners against whom there was no 'heinous charge', provided they gave a similar statement supporting the April 10, 1977 statement of Singh and the CPI(ML) central committee resolution of April 4, 1977.
- iv) All the warrants against the central committee members of CPI (ML) led by Singh should be cancelled.

Both the statement and the terms of release of the Naxalite prisoners were to become a very heated subject of debate among the Naxalite groups. Four leading Naxalites of West Bengal refused to see Singh when he went to visit them in prison, and then issued a statement opposing "negotiation with the government for the release of Naxalite prisoners on certain conditions." The signatories were Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santāl, Ashim Chatterjee, and Souren Bose.⁸⁴ Suniti Kumar Ghose leader of the COC in West Bengal also opposed the 'conditional release'⁸⁵. Whatever the justification of the position of the party on violence as outlined in the statement, they felt this could be a matter for intra-party or intra-Naxalite discussion rather than becoming a price to pay for

buying the release of prisoners. Singh's conduct was considered by many Naxalites as dishonourable and unworthy of a revolutionary.⁸⁶ Towards the end of 1977, the SNS group reviewed their position on this issue, and came out with an admission that, while the dialogue with the Home Minister was not improper, "the decision of the party leadership to advise jail comrades to give a statement supporting the CC decision of April 4, 1977 was a serious mistake. Although it was not an understanding at all, it did create an impression on the public mind that some sort of condition was being accepted by the party. It gave a handle to our critics to create confusion in the ranks of the communist revolutionaries in the country. The central committee has rectified this mistake and advises the jail comrades not to give such a statement to the jail authority."⁸⁷

While a large majority of the Naxalite prisoners have been released by now, there still remain many prisoners in various parts of the country. In West Bengal, one of the first acts of the United Front government led by CPI (M) with Jyoti Basu as the Chief Minister which came to power after defeating both the Janata and the Congress party in the June 1977 assembly elections, was to announce the unconditional release of all Naxalite prisoners and the withdrawal of warrants and cases pending against them. This, however, could not be brought into immediate effect in many cases since quite a number of Naxalite leaders and activists, while held in West Bengal prisons, were convicted by courts in other states. Although there was some misgiving among the Naxalites about the attitude of the government at the beginning, very soon all the doubts were removed, and several prominent Naxalite leaders gave public statements declaring that the Basu government is sincere in redeeming its pledge.⁸⁸ In fact the government took the initiative in conducting negotiations with other state governments—particularly the governments of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh—to secure the release of Naxalite prisoners.

Debate on Participation in the Election

The second major issue of the period was the question of participation in elections. We have noted above that even as late as 1975, the Singh group was firmly opposed to participation, but after the March 1977 election their policy changed. In the April 10, 1977 statement Singh declared: "The party has already decided to participate in the coming assembly elections." In the elections the CPI (ML) led by Singh contested from five constituencies—three in West Bengal, and one each in Punjab and Bihar—and supported one candidate in Madhya Pradesh. In one of them in Gopiballavpore, West Bengal, the scene of an armed uprising in the late sixties — their candidate won the election, defeating both the Janata and CPI(M) candidates. In other constituencies this group supported the CPI(M) (in West Bengal), Akali (Punjab) and

Janata (in other places) candidates.

This again became a major issue of debate among the Naxalites. Several groups—the UCCRI (ML), the COC(ML), and the Unity Committee (ML)—opposed it on the ground that it would create ideological confusion and parliamentary illusions which the Naxalites had fought so consistently over the past ten years.³⁹ Even Jayasree Rana, the wife of the successful candidate from Gopiballavpore, Santosh Rana, and a leading figure in the civil liberties campaign in West Bengal, refused to support her husband, and formed a new party, CPI(ML) (Bolshevik) to register this point publicly.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the CPI(ML) took the view that the election campaign helped the party to put across its message to the people without fear, to reorganise itself at the grass root level, and to strengthen its link with the masses. After the elections, in a document issued in December 1977, the party said: “The decision of the CC to participate in the elections has been proved to be correct by the election results.”⁴¹

The hostility towards participation in the elections declined as the June election approached. While some of the groups maintained even up to the time of the election that the Naxalites themselves should not participate in it, there was hardly any campaign for boycotting the election this time. Some of the leading Naxalites — including Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santal, Ashim Chatterjee, and Souren Bose — issued a statement from prison saying that the slogan of ‘boycotting election’ would have amounted to ‘strengthening the hands of autocracy’ at the time of the March election,⁴² and asked the people in West Bengal to support the CPI(M)-led united front candidates in the June election. The Unity Committee (ML) was split on this issue.⁴³

Relations with the Janata Party

Finally, the attitude to adopt towards the Janata party continued to be a major area of difference in this period also. As we have already noted, the CPI (ML) led by Singh was the first among the left groups and parties in India to give ‘unconditional’ support to the JP-led Bihar movement in 1974-75, and that it supported the Janata party during the March 1977 election campaign. This was consistent with the position of the party that ‘fascism’ was the main enemy of the time, and a very broad based united front was essential to combat it. To the extent that the Janata party emerged as the main challenge to the Indira government, the CPI (ML)’s decision to support it followed from this general political line. After the formation of the Janata government, the CPI (ML) gave them ‘critical support’.

All these were seen by the critics of Singh in the movement as acts of surrender to a bourgeois-landlord party, which was as much a class enemy of the people of India as the Indira Congress. Singh’s close association with the pro-kulak Home Minister of India, Charan Singh,

and the wide press publicity he and his organization received also became matters of severe comment. Apart from a great deal of personal abuse thrown against him, and much that was written about his 'opportunism', 'betrayal' and so on, a major point his critics made was that Singh, with the help of the ruling party and the press, was appropriating the 'revolutionary tradition' of the CPI (ML) which was now split into many groups and factions of which Singh's group was only one.⁴⁴

There is no doubt that Singh's association with JP and the Janata was beneficial to both sides. On the Janata side, this provided some credibility to their claim that they represented the entire political spectrum of the country—from the extreme right (Jan Sangh) to the extreme left (Naxalites)—and in many meetings throughout the length and breadth of the country the Janata leaders read out statements of Singh to prove that point. This certainly helped in giving Janata the image of a party of national consensus against authoritarianism. Even before the emergency, the support of the Singh group proved critical in creating a picture that the JP-led campaign, was a broadbased national movement at a time when the CPI (M), the largest leftwing party, while providing support from outside, was unwilling to formally enter his organization. This support was useful in silencing those who accused JP of leading a movement of rightwing elements. On the other side, Singh's participation brought a great deal of support and sympathy for the plight of the Naxalite prisoners from the sarvodaya workers; and helped to establish his group as the foremost Naxalite group in the country.

This close association with the Janata Party, in particular with its more reactionary elements represented by Charan Singh, later became a source of great embarrassment for the CPI (ML), when in government it followed reactionary anti-people policies. Opposition to this came even from within the ranks of CPI (ML); and eventually, in its review of the political situation in September 1977 the group was forced to reach the following conclusion: "... the disillusionment with the Janata party is also rapid, and as the economic and political crisis deepens, the people are bound to come in confrontation with the Janata party's government and this is bound to lead to an unprecedented people's upsurge. Considering all these aspects, *our party, therefore withdraws the critical support it had extended to the Janata government earlier and it will hereafter pursue the line of basic opposition towards the same.*"⁴⁵

The Bhojpur Campaign

While the annihilation line of Mazumdar has been repudiated by a large majority of the Naxalites, it is still being followed and put into practice by the Naxalites of Bhojpur, a poor district in perhaps the poorest state of India, Bihar, which also happens to be the native district of Satya Narayan Singh. Although Singh broke away from Mazumdar in 1971, the Naxalites of Bhojpur, under the influence of a local teacher,

Jagadish Mahato, preferred him to Singh. In January 1971 they launched the annihilation campaign, at a time when the leading practitioners of this line in Srikakulam and Gopiballavpore had publicly renounced it. Since then the Naxalites claim to have killed more than 100 landlords and policemen, wounding 300. The yearwise breakdown of annihilations as given by Naxalite sources, is as follows: 1971—4, 1972—2, 1973—2, 1974—33, 1975—17, 1976—9, 1977—24. The figures show an increase both during the pre-emergency JP campaign, and after the end of the emergency, while the tempo of activities, as measured by the rate of annihilation, was low at the time of the emergency. There is no way of verifying these claims, given the Naxalite tendency of claiming non-political murders if these are committed by the poorer section or against the richer section of the peasantry.⁴⁶

Two features of this campaign deserve comment. First, the involvement of the lower, exploited castes — *yadavs*, *koeris*, and *kurmis* — in the campaign. In many cases these castes have taken up arms against the landlords and the rich peasantry rather spontaneously, without being prompted by the Naxalites, but then they have been dubbed as 'Naxalites' by both the authorities and the Naxalites for their own, separate reasons; the authorities in order to justify their ruthless suppression of the just democratic demands of the poor peasantry, and the Naxalites in order to exaggerate their influence and the spread of their activities. The second feature is, that unlike in West Bengal after April 1970, until the death of Mazumdar, the Naxalites have refrained from identifying the other leftwing political parties, CPI, SUC, CPI(M), and Socialists, as their 'class enemies'. In fact, they seem to have reached an implicit understanding with the CPI, which is dominant in the western part of the district, to avoid fratricidal war and interference in each other's work.

The leader of the campaign, Jagadish Mahato, was killed by the villagers after an 'action' when he was mistaken as a dacoit. Mahato played the same role here as Vempatapu Satyanaran in Srikakulam or Sanyal in Naxalbari, outsiders who earned respect by working among the locals. But the rest of the leadership is local. This campaign holds a place of special significance, not so much as a Naxalite attempt to capture state power but as a movement supported by the lower castes and poor peasants, against the background of the repressive activities of the landlords and rich elements in the villages in Bihar.

Naxalites and CPI (M)

The period since 1972 has also witnessed a drastic change in the attitude of the Naxalites towards the CPI (M), its parent party and also its main rival during the first five years. In its June 1974 meeting, the CPI(ML) led by Singh admitted that "the five point programme" of the "general cadres of the revisionist parties" (meaning CPI (M), had

"disrupted the unity of the toiling people, strengthened the hands of the enemy, isolated the party from the broad masses of the people, and thus caused immense harm to the cause of the revolution."⁴⁷ Afterwards, against the background of the emergency rule, this group stated that in "building the united front of struggle against fascism, we must give priority to approach the cadres and the masses behind the CPI (M) and the various socialist groups and the followers of JP."⁴⁸ In a document released in December 1977, while still criticising CPI (M) as a "neo-revisionist party" which "justifies the exploitation of our country by Soviet social imperialism", which follows a "class collaborationist line" and adheres to "bourgeois nationalism", it justified a policy of seeking unity with CPI (M) on various issues such as civil liberties, elections, and the fight against Indira-fascism.⁴⁹

As regards the CPI (M)-led government of West Bengal, the policy of CPI(ML) is one of "critical support". This is despite their view that this government would be unable to bring about any basic change; on the contrary in their view, the sole objective of CPI (M) is to cling to power, establish themselves as a viable political force, and then capture power at the centre through elections. But while "we must expose this strategy before the people and its cadres", and encourage anti-feudal struggles to prepare people for revolution, "at the same time we should defend this government if the big bourgeois landlord classes conspire to overthrow this government by any means." Again, "we must approach the local cadres of the CPM and its other partners, to support these (that is, anti-feudal) struggles and try to build a united movement with them on these issues." This group was prepared to go even further in other states: "while criticising the CPM leadership for its parliamentary path we must at the same time unite with the CPM at all levels, particularly at the lower levels, on all possible issues, particularly in building the people's struggles on immediate economic and political demands of various sections of the people."⁵⁰

The other groups also seem to have adopted a somewhat more tolerant position vis-a-vis the CPI (M), compared to their attitude in the 1967-72 period when this party was considered as the main enemy and its destruction was seen as a precondition for developing non-parliamentary revolutionary class consciousness among the leftwing cadres and the people. The annihilation policy, even though it is being implemented by some groups, is no longer applied against this party; and quite a number of Naxalite groups supported the CPI(M) candidates during the two elections in 1977. On the civil liberties issue, both being at the receiving end of state repression, the Naxalites have found they have more in common with the CPI (M) than they would have liked to admit.

Ideologically also there seems to have been a convergence of thinking on a large number of issues. Immediate armed struggle for the

capture of state power, in the belief that the people of India are ready for revolution, has been discarded by the Naxalites, and like the CPI(M) they too are now committed to a series of partial struggles on economic and political demands, in order to raise the political consciousness of the people or to establish links with the broadest possible section of masses. A united front is no longer taboo; in fact in some instances, for example the JP-led movement, the Naxalites have appeared willing to be even more accommodating than the CPI(M), without feeling embarrassed about their association with rightwing elements.

Differences, however, persist on several issues. First, the allegiance of the Naxalites to the Chinese party or its various minority factions. Whatever their differences with one another on interpretation, all the Naxalite groups accept Mao's thoughts as their guiding principles. Their characterisation of the Soviet Union as 'social imperialist', and as being more dangerous than U S imperialism, their 'three world' analysis which even makes the capitalist countries of Europe the allies of the revolutionaries in their fight against 'social imperialism', and their refusal to accept the national aspirations of the people as being the main force behind the Bangladesh liberation struggle—all these are cases of important differences on international questions which cannot be easily bridged. Whereas the CPI (M) leadership is prepared to have friendly relations with the Communist Party of China, in contrast with the attitude of the Naxalites, they would expect such relationship to be governed by the principles of total equality between the fraternal parties, non-interference in each other's affairs, and resolution of conflicts through party-to-party affairs, and resolution of conflicts through party-to-party dialogue. Although China does not figure so prominently in the Naxalite literature of today as it did only five years ago, even now the foreign policy of China continues to have a major impact on the policy formulation of the Naxalites.

A second area of difference would be their contrasting position on the analysis of class character of the Indian state. While both the CPI(M) and the Naxalites talk of bourgeoisie-landlord rule, there are vast differences between them on the nature of such rule.⁶¹ Furthermore, the Naxalite analysis talks of 'four mountains' on the back of the Indian people, the other two being the two superpowers who are controlling the two dominant Indian classes. Here again, the recent acceptance by the CPI (ML) group led by Singh that not all the bourgeoisie is 'comprador', and not all the rich peasants are 'feudal', goes a long way towards correcting the highly simplistic class analysis, and brings it nearer to the CPI (M) position, but not enough yet.

Thirdly, even where there are similarities in the formal position of the two—for example on the use of the parliamentary institutions, or on the use of mass organizations for developing political consciousness among the people—doubts and suspicions persist, as to whether these

statements are really meant or are being advanced to hide the real counter-revolutionary intentions. A reading of Naxalite literature would prove how deep this sense of mistrust is among them regarding the CPI (M).

Lastly, perhaps the biggest stumbling block is the history of the 1967-72 period, the confrontations between the two, the killings, and the hatred generated by all this. This partly explains why, even after their recognition of the inadequacies of their earlier stand, and despite their disillusionment with the Chinese party after the 'Lin Piao' and 'gang of four' episodes, many of the Naxalites have hesitated to join the CPI (M). This emotional barrier between the two cannot be easily dismantled; this is as true of the Naxalites as of the CPI (M) rank and file.

All this does not exclude the possibilities which exist for the Naxalites and the CPI (M), and indeed many other groups to join hands on specific issues—whether localised or national in scope—be it the civil liberties campaign which has not lost its relevance with the accession to power of the Janata government, or the partial struggles of the poor peasants, workers and the middle class. To a great extent such united action is already taking place in many areas and work places.

While the ideological conflict between the Naxalites and the CPI (M) will continue—and the conflict by its very nature might even be an antagonistic one—there is no reason why this cannot be resolved in a non-antagonistic way. It is important for the Naxalite leaders of various persuasions to ensure that they are not used by the government and the ruling classes to weaken the CPI (M) and other leftwing parties, as they were in West Bengal during 1967-72. A major lesson of that period is that an attack against the CPI (M)—particularly the government led by the CPI (M) in West Bengal—would eventually be turned into an attack against all types of leftwing forces including the Naxalites in the second phase. Taking the country as a whole, the left is too weak to indulge in the luxury of fratricidal war which will only benefit the ruling classes, and confuse the people. While ideological conflict and polemics will persist as long as there are many leftwing parties, it is important that they make the ruling classes, and not one another, the main target of their attack.

Present Position of the Movement

At the time of writing this postscript on the Naxalite Movement, the picture one gets of the movement is as follows. Although a large number of the Naxalites have been released from prison, very few of them have joined active politics; some have dropped out because of disillusionment with the way the movement has progressed during the intervening years, and some others are unwilling to make hasty decisions regarding their political work without first giving themselves time to reflect and to make a thorough assessment of the movement. While

there are many groups and factions in the movement, a large number of Naxalites, despite maintaining a broad sympathetic attitude towards the movement, are opposed to joining one group or another. In fact the dominant trend among the Naxalites is opposed to the hasty formation of a highly centralised party organization without first engaging in full and open discussions on various ideological and organizational issues among them. Some would even argue that groupism and factionalism is 'inevitable' in this particular phase in the history of their movement.

The classification of various factions into some broad groupings is not easy, given the shifts in political position, movement of individuals from one group to another, mergers and splits—all of which have dogged the movement almost from the very first day of its existence. Broadly speaking, a minority of the groups still adhere to the preaching of Mazumdar, while the great majority of them are opposed to it. The pro-CM Naxalites are again divided into the following three groups: pro-Lin Piao, the group led by Mahadev Mukherjee and supported among others by a body called North Bengal-Bihar regional committee of the CPI (ML); anti-Lin Piao, the group which is now conducting a mini-revolt in Bhojpur district in Bihar; and the COC(ML) group led by Suniti Kumar Ghosh, and Appalasuri, which has a large following among the Naxalites of Srikakulam. The largest anti-CM group is of course the one led by Satyanarayan Singh, which is called by the name of its parent body CPI (ML), and in this postscript we have provided a good deal of detail about its position on a wide range of issues. The second largest is perhaps the UCCRI(ML), the Andhra-based group, popularly known as the Nagi Reddy group, which was the first to defect from Mazumdar's organization, which never joined the CPI(ML), and which now seems to feel with a great deal of justification, that its ideological stand against Mazumdar has been vindicated by the history of the movement. This group is now led by D Venkateswara Rao, a leading figure of the 'Telengana uprising' of 1946-51. A long way behind these two is the Unity Committee led by Khokan Mazumdar, a Naxalite from North Bengal who was closely associated with Charu Mazumdar, and Kaushik Banerjee, about whom very little is known. Many other groups—Maoist Communist Centre, and CPIML (Bolshevik) among them—exist, most of which are centered around one or two prominent individuals. And a point we made earlier, a vast number of Naxalites do not belong to any of these groups, despite their sympathy for the movement. Although several attempts have been made in the past to unite the Naxalites, and several committees to unify, coordinate or consult were formed, none of these could be sustained for long; and the 'dialogue' among them, while beginning in the friendliest of spirit soon degenerated into mutual accusations of 'revisionism', 'trotskyism', 'opportunism', and so on. Debates on ideological and political issues have often become very subjective — based on the assessment of the

political and personal credibility of individuals. While on two major points Naxalites of all description are in full agreement—their allegiance to Mao's thought, and the demand for the release of political prisoners—on practically every other point, differences between them are too wide to be bridged in the near future.

I am grateful to many friends who helped me in various ways in preparing this paper, in particular to Biren Roy, a known trade unionist of Calcutta, and Hira Singh, a lecturer of Sociology in Delhi University.

- ¹ Bipul Dasgupta, *The Naxalite Movement*, Allied Publishers, Delhi, 1974.
- ² Quoted in *Sfulinga* (a Bengali journal published by the North Bengal Bihar Border regional committee, a pro-CM organisation), No 1, 1974.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p 18. Even Kanu Sanyal was castigated for not 'unconditionally accepting' Mazumdar's leadership. See also Dasgupta, *op cit.*, pp 159-160.
- ⁴ Dasgupta, *op cit.*, p 232.
- ⁵ *Liberation*, October 1974—June 1975.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ 'Problems and Tasks before the Party', a review by the extended central committee meeting of CPI(ML) of the period from November 1971 to June 1974, *Ibid.*
- ⁸ 'Indian Revolution and its Path,' a document produced by the central committee of CPI(ML) on 22 April 1975, *Liberation*, June—July 1975.
- ⁹ The Problems and Tasks before the Party', *op cit.*
- ¹⁰ *Sfulinga*, *op cit.*, no 2, 1974. They even argued, quoting Mao, that "setback is necessary".
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ "Like Lin Piao, Mazumdar can now be made the scapegoat for all the failings of CPI(ML) in 1967-72". See Dasgupta, p 233.
- ¹⁴ See Dasgupta, *op cit.*, p 195, for the details.
- ¹⁵ See Dasgupta, *op cit.*, Chapter 6 for details.
- ¹⁶ Dasgupta, *op cit.*, pp 189-190.
- ¹⁷ *Liberation*, October 1974—June 1975, *op cit.*
- ¹⁸ UCCRI(ML), "Mao Tsetung will live in our hearts for ever", resolution of the central committee on the death of Comrade Mao Tsetung pp 36—37.
- ¹⁹ *Eight historic documents on the uncompromising struggle against revisionism* by our respected leader Charu Mazumdar. Published in Bengali by North Bengal-Bihar border regional committee of CPI (ML). Although their existence was known at the time of writing the book (p 6), it was not until recently that these came into possession.
- ²⁰ Dasgupta, *op cit.*, p 204.
- ²¹ *Liberation*, October 1974—January 1975, *op cit.*
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ *Liberation*, June—July 1975, *op cit.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Dasgupta *op cit.*, see pp 192-193 for an account of the difference between Mazumdar and Ashim Chatterjee on this subject.
- ²⁶ *Liberation*, October 1974—January 1975, *op cit.*
- ²⁷ Dasgupta, *op cit.*, p 205,
- ²⁸ *Liberation* October 1974—January 1975.
- ²⁹ *Liberation*, June—July 1975.
- ³⁰ *Liberation*, November 1975—February 1976.
- ³¹ 'Our tactical line and the COC critic of Andhra' *Liberation*, August—October 1976. This article also mentioned the agreement reached between the COC and the

CPI(ML) in March-April 1976 on a joint programme and on a code of inter-party discussion with a view to bring about unity: "Ruthless attacks against comrades should be avoided, the language should be sober and restrained, the methods should be methods of reasoning and persuasion and the attitude should be one of 'curing the disease in order to save the patient'". This article expressed its disappointment that the other side was not keeping its part of the understanding. However, the very same group showed scanty respect for this code when it attacked D Venkateswara Rao of the UCCRI on the betrayal of the Telengana movement and the suppression of truth. See 'The postscript on the Great Heroic Telengana Struggle (1946-51) and the Agrarian Struggle-the treachery of the revisionists and the neo-revisionists', dated March 23, 1976, published in an undated number of *Liberation*.

⁸² Sunil Kumar Ghosh, "The Civil Liberties Movement and Recent Experience" *Frontier*, July 23, 1977.

⁸³ Published in several national papers on 11 April 1977.

⁸⁴ *Frontier*, May 28, 1977.

⁸⁵ Ghosh, *op cit*.

⁸⁶ See letters published in *Frontier* on these, particularly in the following numbers: May, 14 1977; June, 18 1977; and also the editorial on May, 21 1977 alleging that the Janata leadership was creating confusion among the Naxalites by winning over Satya Narayan Singh to their side.

⁸⁷ 'Political and Organisational Review of the CC, CPI(ML), *Communist Review*, December 1977.

⁸⁸ See for example press statements given by Jangal Santal and Ashim Chatterjee soon after their release.

⁸⁹ See footnotes 31, 32, 33, 35.

⁹⁰ *Frontier*, June, 18 1977.

⁹¹ *Communist Review*, *op cit*.

⁹² *Frontier*, 28 May 1977.

⁹³ See the two conflicting letters from the same groups published in *Frontier*, 14 May 1977.

⁹⁴ *Frontier*, August 6, 1977.

⁹⁵ *Communist Review*, *op cit*.

⁹⁶ For details see the following: Arun Sinha, 'Awakening in Bhojpur' *Frontier*, December 31, 1976 and January 7, 1977; Hiranmay Dhar, 'Bhojpur, Bihar', *Frontier*, May 14, 1977.

⁹⁷ *Liberation*, October 1974-January 1975, *op cit*.

⁹⁸ *Liberation*, November 1975-February 1976.

⁹⁹ *Communist Review*, *op cit*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹ Dasgupta *op cit*., pp 116-121.

FRANCOIS HOUTART

GENEVIEVE LEMERCINIER

*Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala:
A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production*

PART TWO

ALTHOUGH the Nambudiris were not numerically large, they dominated the social ensemble in caste society. Most of them were landed proprietors, and some had also become councillors or ministers in the three kingdoms of Travancore, Cochin and Calicut. From the beginning of the 19th century Tamil Brahmins had been called in to staff the administration of Travancore, and after the invasion of Tipu Sultan in the north a certain number of Brahmins from Mysore and Malabar had also emigrated to the south. However, the *Nambudiris* were still the oldest and most influential section among the Brahmins of Kerala.

Rejecting any kind of manual or even commercial activity, they were dedicated essentially to certain types of intellectual work: astronomy, ayurvedic medicine and the study of the Hindu scriptures (the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and so on) and rituals. But most of them spent their lives in idleness. Their family organization, which was of the patrilineal type, depended on the unity of the clan and on its appropriation of the soil, and was characterized by the peculiarity that only the eldest son could marry within the caste. This resulted in a very awkward situation for the younger sons, and even more so for the women, the majority of whom had to be satisfied with being the second, third or even the fourth

wife of the head of a family. This accounts for the large number of young widows in the group.

When the social changes described earlier (in PART ONE) began, the *Nambudiris* refused to enter the stream of modernization. Even in 1910 there were only 976 boys of this group in the schools, while the first girl pupil entered only in 1911. But the reactions of the *Nayars* inevitably affected the *Nambudiris* too, on account of the type of relationship existing between the two groups in the caste structure.

Discontent showed itself first among the young, who demanded the right to an English education, new marriage regulations, better means of subsistence, and an end to the sufferings of the women, whose status was most unenviable. Two Associations were founded, the *Yogakshema Mahasabha* under the direction of Kurur Unni Nambudiri in 1909, and the Youth League, or *Nambudiri Yuvajana Sangham* somewhat later. The latter showed radical tendencies, while even the former met with deep opposition from the orthodox group.¹

The written word, carried through the medium of the newly established daily papers and periodicals (such as the *Yogaksheman*² and the monthly *Unni Nambudiri*) also played an important part in the movement. The young Brahmins also expressed themselves through drama, and produced some of the best works in Malayalam literature, such as *Adukaleyil ninnu Arangath*. On the religious plane too there was a demand for the reform of beliefs, strikingly similar to those we have already described. Under the influence of Palpu and K Ayyappan, the leaders of the *Izhava* emancipation movement, one of their own leaders, V T Bhattathiripad, took up a very advanced social position, even going so far as to propose a classless society, which provoked, as we may imagine, the most violent opposition.

Later on the movement allied itself with the Indian National Congress. At the same time it fought against polygamy, in favour of education, and demanded of its followers—as a sign of their rupture with the old order—that they should refuse to wear the sacred thread, a privilege reserved for the Brahmins alone. The movement later split into moderates and radicals. Among the latter was E M S Nambudiripad, who struggled for the entry of the *Nambudiris* into the professions, and for a society built on work and production. He later became the leader of the Communist Party and the Chief Minister of Kerala in 1957 and again in 1967.

The ancient laws were amended, and in 1931 the Travancore Malayali Brahmin Regulation was promulgated. This was a prelude to the Madras Nambudiri Act of 1933. The juridical changes enabled the group which had been dominant in the caste structure to carry out the necessary internal transformation, but it also marked the end of its exclusive dominance. Demographically the *Nambudiris* had by this time been reduced to a very small number indeed. But they were now able

like the *Nayars*, to enter gradually into the new class structure and to obtain high places within it. They still possessed large estates, although some of them never succeeded in adapting themselves to the cultural models of the new society which was dominated by the economic realm. As with the *Nayars*, it was the younger members of the group, excluded from any social or economic share in the former system, who were the first to rebel against it. The women too played a far from negligible role in the movement; some of them even took part in demonstrations for the abolition of the pollution rules. For they too had been the victims of this system.⁸

The Kshatriyas

These were the princely families, whose matrimonial system resembled that of the *Nayars*. Hence very similar problems had arisen in their case. Actually there were only a few such princely families in Kerala, though they were extremely powerful. Indeed from the 16th century onwards the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the British had, in the interests of trade established contacts with these small kingdoms. They in turn had allied themselves with the Europeans, and in the process had strengthened their own armies to the point where they were able to defeat other kingdoms by the force of arms. In any case it was the authority of these political rulers alone which was recognized in commercial transactions. In Travancore, Marthanda Varma carried out a very thorough scheme of centralization. He suppressed the local authorities and organized a modern army on the British model, under the direction of General de Lannoye, an excellent officer of Belgian origin, who had been taken prisoner while serving in the Dutch army.

The British reinforced the royal authority when they named Residents, some of whom even became *dewans*, in the two kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin. These, for example, brought the temples under royal control from the very beginning of the 19th century. Among the *Kshatriyas* too the first reaction was to alter the matrimonial system in order to meet the demands of the younger sons of their families. In 1932 *marumakhatayam* was abolished in Travancore by the *Kshatriya Act*, which laid down new norms for marriage, succession and land division. The Kshatriya Service Society, inspired by the N S S⁴, is an organization still in existence today.

THE NON-HINDUS

On the margin of the caste-structure, though organically related with it, were the non-Hindu groups, the Christians and the Muslims. The former had been in Kerala since the 1st century and the latter since the 9th century A D—that is, they had for a long time formed a recognized part of the social environment. The influence first of the Moghul Empire and then of the European colonial conquests, had had important

effects on Kerala, but the social system based on caste had not been fundamentally affected until the period under the British. It will now be interesting to see what were the effects on the non-Hindu groups of the breakdown of the caste system as the basis of the relations of production. We shall start with the case of the Muslims, and deal later with the Syrian and Latin Christians.

The Muslims

The trade between Kerala and Arabia had begun long before the Arabs became Muslims. From the 13th century onwards most of these commercial activities were concentrated in the north of the country, particularly in Cannanore and Calicut. In this latter kingdom, in addition to their commercial monopoly, the Muslims had received the right to spread their religion. Inter-marriages then led to the formation of a group called *Mappilas*, or *Moplahs*—or more exactly *Jonaha Moplahs*, since the Syrian Christians of mixed descent were known as *Nazrani Moplahs*.⁶ The Muslims, as a consequence, were most numerous in Malabar, especially in the *taluks* of Ernad and Valluvanad. In the course of the 19th century a large number of freed slaves were also converted to Islam, as well as some of the fisherfolk.

The cultural system of the Muslims was extremely antiquated, at least as far as formal education was concerned. In 1872 a plan was drawn up for the Koranic schools attached to each mosque to teach the vernacular language as well, though always under the direction of the local *mullahs* (priests). But the results were disappointing, and in 1894 their educational system was separated from the mosques.

In order to understand the place of the *Moplahs* in the relations of production it is necessary to recall certain historical facts. Those of them who lived along the coast were either fishermen or traders, but in the interior of the country many had become farmers, and were therefore the subjects of Brahmin or other Hindu *jenmis*. When Tippu Sultan occupied Malabar most of these *jenmis* fled to the south and the Muslim farmers, by paying tribute to the State, became the actual owners of their lands. But their ownership lasted barely 25 years, for after the British had defeated Tippu Sultan and imposed on him the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1798 (the Treaty was actually between Tippu and the East India Company), and had themselves assumed administrative control over the territory, the *jenmis* returned. Since the British looked on the *jenmis* as landed proprietors, they introduced the usual type of land-tenure legislation, enabling them to levy taxes on the land—taxes which the *jenmis* as usual, passed on to their tenants. The immediate results were crushing rents, evictions, and so on. We may add that the caste Hindus, on their return, took revenge on the peasants who had been converted to Islam during the rule of the Sultan, by refusing—among other things—to grant them land on which to build mosques or establish

cemeteries⁶. Between 1836 and 1898 there was a succession of peasant revolts, the first of which broke out in the *taluk* of Ernad. These revolts often involved the murder of Hindu *jenmis*, which—from the religious point of view—might be regarded as a meritorious action against injustice.⁷

On the religious plane, the Muslims of Kerala were either *Sunnis* or *Shias* in function of two lineages both of whom claimed to be related to the Prophet. Their religious customs had been influenced by their environment, but they observed the classical Muslim rites and celebrated their own festivals. Certain groups had adopted the *marumakattayam* matrimonial system (those in north of Malabar) but most them, as is normal in the Koran, kept to the patriarchal, or *makattayam*, system. Both polygamy and divorce were accepted practices.

There were a great many of these *Moplah* peasant revolts, but one in particular—that of 1921—had especially deep repercussions on the group. This revolt broke out after certain emancipation movements (of which we shall speak later) had already developed. The immediate circumstance of the outbreak were connected with the *Khalifat* movement although these in fact merely served as the catalyst in a situation in which social relations between the landowners and the small tenant farmers had deteriorated to an almost unbelievable extent. The wretchedness of the *Moplahs* had reached such a point that it had become practically impossible for them to survive. Though they had revolted several times, they failed to better their lot, for the British authorities generally supported the landowners. While it is true that a law passed in 1887, at the instigation of Logan had improved their situation, another law—the repressive Moplah Outrage Act of 1854—had led to a number of atrocities committed by British police agents.

The Khalifat Movement and its Impact

The *Khalifat* movement was the reaction of the Indian Muslim world to the results of the First World War. During this struggle, Indian troops had been engaged in fighting, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine, against Turkey, whose Sultan was also the Caliph, one of the most powerful leaders of Islam. The defeat of the Turks by the Allies, the occupation of Constantinople, and above all the Treaty of Sevres in 1920, appeared to the Indian Muslims, who had been fighting with the British, to constitute a betrayal of their loyalty. This led to the agitation, which in Kerala was led by the brothers Mohammed and Shaukat Ali, against the Government of the Viceroy and in-favour of the Caliph. Gandhi allied himself with this agitation in the hope of uniting the Islamic and Hindu groups in the national movement. The *Khalifat* movement itself was led by elements of the middle class and preached non-violence. When the Turkish revolution occurred in 1922, its objective ceased to exist and it died out of itself.

In Kerala it was the arrest of its national leader, Yakub Hasan, who had come there to participate in some meetings, which served as the catalyst⁸. The incident set up a chain reaction. The role of the mosques in the *Khalifat* movement had clearly demonstrated its religious aspect, and it was the searching of the mosque at Thirurangadi under orders from the British authorities which provoked the first riot. The palace of the Rajah of Nilambur, then the Nambudiri Bank, was attacked and looted. After this the two *taluks* with a *Moplah* majority rose in revolt, considerably aided by the presence of Muslim soldiers recently demobilised, and a real jacquerie followed. The attack was directed against the landowners, and the fact that they were Hindus played only a secondary role⁹. Indeed, the leaders of the revolt arose from among the peasants themselves, nearly a million of whom were involved in it¹⁰. The rebels organized what amounted to a miniature kingdom covering the *taluks* of Ernad and Valluvanad, with Variyamkunnath Kunhamad Haji at its head proclaiming himself "Rajah of the Hindus, Emir of the Muslims and Colonel of the *Khalifat* army"¹¹. But the revolt was put down by the British, using Gurkha troops recruited from among the tribal peoples of the North; this disorganised the movement, which escaped from the control of its improvised leaders and dissipated itself in group antagonism: Muslims against Hindus. That the whole affair was the result of a social revolutionary movement would seem to be well established today. It is clearly shown by the fact that only about 100 Hindu temples (some nine percent of the total) were profaned, and that only 2,500 Hindus (out of a population of roughly 400,000) were submitted to forcible conversion¹². Religious fanaticism did of course play its part, but the class relations existing between the *jenmis* and the peasants or agricultural workers formed the basic element.

In the early 1930's the Muslim leaders, including those involved in the revolt, joined the movements or political institutions, which openly aimed at the defence of the interests of the new and growing middle class. But before dealing with this social evolution it would be well to go back a little in order to take account of other Muslim emancipation movements resembling those which we have seen developing among the various Hindu castes and the outcastes. These movements had arisen at the very beginning of the 20th century, before the great 1921 revolt, and were in fact seriously hampered by it.

Other Trends and Movements

In Travancore, Vakkam Abdul Khadar Maulavi, a religious man (the *maulavi* performs a priestly function superior to that of the *mullah*, who is attached to the local mosque) and an intimate friend of Sri Narayana Guru, was inspired by the activity of the Guru to inaugurate a series of activities of his own aimed at a religious renewal, the abolition of certain customs (superstitions or religious practices such as *channana-*

kudam) and improving the system of education. A certain number of Arabic-language schools were opened, in which the correct teaching of the Koran held an important place.

A number of other organizations, such as the *Dharma Paripala Sangham* and the *Jama Athur Irshad*, sprang up to oppose distortions of the Koran. In 1900 the *Mannathol Islam Sabha* was formed, which among other things established contacts with the various Arab nations of the world. In 1918 an association was set up to establish English schools, and in 1924 the Y M M A (Young Men's Muslim Association) was founded. In 1928 one of the leaders of the movement joined the representatives of the principal groups previously enumerated in the Legislative Assembly¹⁸.

In 1923, during the first meeting of the *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham*, a resolution was passed condemning as harmful both *channanakudam* and *kodikothu* (a matrimonial custom) but this roused the opposition of the conservative Muslims, who declared the Association anti-religious. Efforts were also made in the domain of the Press. A daily paper was founded, '*The Muslim*', which appeared in both Arabic and Malayalam. Two monthly magazines were also published. After independence, other initiatives led to the establishment of colleges and hospitals, of which there were fourteen by 1964¹⁴.

The Muslim League soon became the main Muslim political movement; its first branch in Kerala was founded at Calicut in 1917, and from the start it was controlled by the wealthy merchants and businessmen. Muslim activity also led to legislation: Act XI of 1108, (M E), regulated questions of inheritance and succession within the group in Travancore itself.

The activities we have just analysed among the Muslims were not of course caste phenomena properly so called, and we cannot say that they modified the caste structure in any way. The movements were all on the fringe of the caste structure. Nevertheless they were far from being on the fringe of the *class* structure which this system really covered especially during the British regime. The movements indeed took on a double dimension. First of all there was a series of movements aimed at social emancipation, closely parallel to those of the lower Hindu castes, for they had all the characteristics of the latter: the religious basis, cultural aspects (schools, newspapers) and middle class leadership. But, secondly, there were also the mass revolts, which did not in the event lead to any true social movement, and which were put down firmly. This second type of movement as a general rule results in the creation of a deep trauma among the peasant masses, a trauma which paralyses them unless they are organized into a revolutionary framework which they trust.

Consequently the results obtained were meagre. Literacy made some progress in the group, but much more slowly than in the other

groups, for the cultural resistance was very much stronger. The mass of people continued to stagnate, both socially and economically, while a minority quickly integrated itself into the rising middle—often Anglicised—class. This minority consisted of groups in a higher position in the pre-capitalist society, since the schools enabled individuals in this situation to improve their status—without any effect on the social advancement of the group as such. Among the Muslims too the success of certain individuals on the political or cultural plane was represented as a victory for the group—that is the community—although the symbolic value of their success had a highly illusory significance in what was now becoming a class society.

The Christians

It is clearly impossible to include all the Christians in the same category, as do most authors, historians and even sociologists. For this would mean forgetting the important differences which existed, and still exist, between the various groups within this section of the population. We must not only distinguish the Syrians from the Latins but also remember that in each of these major groupings there were also important differences between the sub-groups. Again, there can obviously be no question, within the framework of this article of giving an adequate account of social processes which each of these groups passed through. We propose therefore only to take note of a few factors which enable us to understand the differences between the situation of the Hindu and Muslim groups—and also the chief differences between those of the Christian sub-groups themselves.

We must note first of all that the problem naturally presented itself in different terms for the Christians and for the Hindus. There was no need in their case to break down a caste system, since the Christians were not in fact integrated into it. They were merely attached to its outer fringe. They had of course adopted very widely the social practices of the Hindu groups, especially those of the caste Hindus in the case of the Syrians; they also practised internal discrimination closely resembling that of caste-relations; the Syrians indeed possessed slaves, their internal organization was in many ways like that of the castes. All this is obvious. The fact remains that they did not form an element in the caste structure.

During the period we are now discussing, the most important distinction among the Christians was that between the Catholics and the Orthodox Christians. For one thing the latter had suffered very much more, in Travancore at least, from the centralization effected by Maharajah Marthanda Varma. It will be recalled that this ruler had conquered a number of small neighbouring kingdoms, and that the Syrians had fought against him in the armies of the lesser Rajahs. This had cost them their prestige and status. We may add that the Dutch,

during the latter period of their dominance, had favoured the Catholics over the Orthodox, which had not been the case in Cochin, for instance, when they established themselves there. At the end of the 18th century the majority of the *Puthencoor* (Orthodox) Christians were poor. They were, for the most part farmers, small traders or even daily labourers. Some of them traditionally served as soldiers. Their community had relatively little contact with foreigners, while the Catholics had European Bishops and in some cases foreign priests too, who succeeded in giving the group another kind of social representation with the authorities, whether foreign or local.

The *Puthencoor* Christians, besides being poor, were also subjected to exactions of every kind, as we see from a letter of Colonel Munro to the Government of Madras¹⁶. They were obliged to give their services and to pay contributions to the Hindu temples, and were also subject to specific taxes, especially for their festivals. According to Fra Paoli do San Bartolomeo, who published his book *Voyage to the East Indies* in 1796, there were at this time 64 Catholic Syro-Chaldean churches in Kerala, with 90,000 members, and 32 "Jacobite" Churches with 50,000 parishioners¹⁷. These Jacobite Churches were in a bad state of repair, since most of them were very poor.

The Orthodox and the Protestants

We cannot go into details concerning the activities of a politician like Munro, although these had very important effects on the Christians of Kerala. Himself a religious man, Munro possessed a vision going beyond his political function. He recognized the wretched state of the Orthodox Syrians and wished to contribute to the improvement of their situation. With this in view, he persuaded the English missionaries to help the seminary at Kottayam, and even obtained financial aid for it from the kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin, in particular from the Rani Lakshmi Poai. Indeed he saw in the Orthodox Syrians a group which might be able to convert the south of India to Christianity, and this was one of the reasons for his support.

The Protestants undertook a two-fold project, collaborating with the Orthodox, as in the case of the Kottayam seminary, and at the same time engaging in direct proselytism. The first of these enterprises was interrupted after some years (in 1838, to be precise) and later led to serious divisions within the Orthodox fold, when the Mar Thomas Church, created in 1888, brought together all the Syrians who had been influenced by the modern ideas of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, both on the theological and on the practical level. But this collaboration had other consequences within the Jacobite group too. Thus in 1820 two score Jacobite priests married, out of the 150 in the group at that time. Bibles and other religious books were also published.

The Protestant efforts at direct conversion were at the beginning

conducted through their schools. In 1817 Thomas Norton founded a school at Alleppey with 301 boys and 57 girls. In 1819 it was the turn of Trichur, and in 1839 came the foundation of New College at Kottayam¹⁷. The same kind of activity was going on in Malabar, thanks to the Basel Mission, which founded a school at Calicut in 1848, and the "Zamorin's College" in the same town in 1877¹⁸. Every mission centre also had its own school.

The conversions to Christianity which followed were made among the lower castes.¹⁹ In fact quite a serious conversion movement began to gather force in the mid-19th century²⁰, and this naturally aroused opposition from the caste Hindus, since it disrupted caste relations. In 1857 the baptism of 90, and in 1860 of 775, mountain *Aryans* was reported²¹. At this same period some *Izhavas* also became Christians, together with a larger number of *Pulayas*, *Kuravas* and *Vedans*²². The Syrians were not very enthusiastic about these conversions from the lower castes, and some of them opposed the presence of the converts in the same churches as themselves²³. By 1870 the number of new Christians had risen to 12,000²⁴.

On the economic and political plane the situation of the Syrians now began to change for the better. In 1870 a group among them complained to the Government of Travancore that their laws of succession were not clearly defined. After 1880 they began to acquire land. They also took part in the presentation of the Malayali Memorial in 1891. The group was now undergoing a process of economic improvement, supported as they were by the religious authorities in their claims before the Popular Assembly. These were the conditions in which the organizations aimed at fostering such efforts emerged. In Travancore the most noteworthy was the *Christian Maha Jana Sabha*, with its centre established at Kottayam; it demanded changes in the succession laws and the abolition both of child marriage and of the dowry system²⁵. The main objective, then, was the adaptation of the internal customs of the group to the change in economic relations characteristic of a capitalistic monetary economy. The results were not long delayed, for a commission was set up in 1911, which led to the Christian Succession Act of 1916 in Travancore.

The Syrians, both Orthodox and Catholic, were by now entering into strong competition with the *Nayars*, for their family system, far more flexible than that of these caste Hindus, had enabled them to integrate much more easily into the new economic system while at the same time maintaining their family cohesion. In Cochin the evolution took longer; it was only in 1921 that the new Rules were approved. Both the Orthodox and the Catholics, then, entered in large numbers and very quickly into the new intermediate class. In 1921 half the number of those literate in English belonged to this group. The first woman in Kerala to obtain a B A degree, in 1909, was an Anglican

Syrian. They also invested in the new plantations, especially in rubber, and from the 1920's onward the fields of finance and foreign trade once more became familiar to them.²⁶ In 1921 eleven banks out of fifty were Syrian. Thanks to their new wealth, some of them were also able to invest in industry.²⁷

The Catholics

It is difficult, in the case of the Syrians, to make a complete distinction between the Catholics and the rest, so that a good deal of what was said in the preceding section applies also here. However, the original situation of the Catholics was different. This was because from Portuguese times they had had a European hierarchy, which naturally found itself in a certain relationship of solidarity with the colonial powers, at least more directly than did the Orthodox. It was only in 1884 that a real Syrian hierarchy was introduced, as a first step towards an autochthonous episcopate—though this in fact followed only much later. In 1905 the *Catholic Maha Jana Sabha* was founded, an association parallel to that of the Orthodox, and which worked towards transforming the succession laws.

The schools played an important role in this case too. In Trichur in 1911 the Catholic Syrians had 200 primary schools, 4 secondary schools for girls and a college; in Ernakulam 250 elementary schools, 5 secondary schools and 2 seminaries; in Kottayam 14 primary schools as well as 3 secondary schools for boys and 2 for girls; and finally at Changanachery 16 schools for boys and 13 for girls.²⁸ These were all founded by the clergy, who exercised the main leadership in the group and enjoyed a monopoly of such initiatives.

In the case of the Latin Catholics there were a number of problems, which varied considerably according to the different groups; some among them were already to be found in the rising middle class, but these were a minority. The fisherfolk, on the contrary, continued to live on the fringe of the new society as they had done in the old. Thus when at the beginning of the 19th century some of the fishermen who had entered the service of the British decided to send their sons to the seminary, this aroused the opposition of the Syrian Catholics and also of some among the Latins, on account of the social belonging of the fishermen. They were therefore obliged to send their sons to the seminary in Bombay, which was far from pleasing to their antagonists. The Congregation of Propaganda in Rome ruled on the case in 1832, decreeing that the fisherfolk could send their candidates for the priesthood to Bombay, but that not more than five of them at a time should be admitted to these studies.²⁹ Access to the priesthood was clearly a powerful symbol of a rise in the social scale. Some groups among the Catholics tried to obtain a monopoly of this access, while others, like the fisherfolk for instance, saw in it an expression of collective promo-

tion for the group. On the one hand the solution of social contradictions was still situated within the symbolic universe, which among other things enabled certain individuals to see themselves as representing the whole collectivity, while on the other hand the Church, as the religion-bearing institution, appeared to be the best instrument for bringing about a change in the symbolic order.

Various efforts were made by the Latin Catholics to further their social interests. But the group was not sufficiently homogeneous. It was a coir merchant, B M Peter, who founded the Cochin State Latin Christian Congress in Cochin, and this was quickly followed by the All Kerala Latin Catholic Association, which concentrated most of its attention on helping the poor, particularly the fishermen. It developed a number of projects for the education of the poor, for supplying fresh water to the coastal communities and for fostering small industries. However, one of its main objectives was the defence of the Latin Catholics. The leadership of this association, as was the case with the other groups, was principally taken from among the members of the new middle class, and the objectives pursued, whether in the political or the educational sphere, served the interests (everything considered) mainly of this rising middle class. This is a very common social phenomenon, whenever social organizations or movements within a dominant capitalist mode of production are based on the belonging to socially diverse ethnic, linguistic or religious communities and not on social classes. This was obviously the case in Kerala, even though production was as yet only weakly industrialized and although the sources of economic power were for the most part established outside the territory of Kerala itself.

The Anglo-Indians

The Anglo-Indians formed a specific group among the Latin Catholics. Their economic situation in the middle of the 19th century was lamentable. An Association, the Anglo-Indian Defence Association, was founded in 1882, well before those of the Latin Catholics as a whole. But it did not last long. Chevelier C Paul Luiz attempted to unite the Anglo-Indians again in 1922, but he too failed. A few technical schools were begun. In 1934 the South Malabar Anglo-Indian Association was formed, and the Federated Anglo-Indian Association of Cochin, Travancore and South Malabar in 1929. Its principal objective was to organize visits to the poorer members of the community, but it was also active in education. Cooperatives were started, and a Youth Society.

In 1951 there were about 25,000 Anglo-Indians in Kerala. Their leaders made an appeal to the ecclesiastical authorities for the creation of an Anglo-Indian diocese of their own, on the same basis as the Syrian Sudists who had one at Kottayam. A meeting was called, the All Kerala Convention, which presented an address to the Internuncio and

to the Pope. The document claimed that such a decision would contribute not only to the spiritual welfare but also to the temporal advancement of the Anglo-Indians. But the request was refused. The incident illustrates the importance of the religious institution in the symbolic field and also in the enhancement of group status.

As with the other groups in Kerala, here too emancipation depended heavily on culture and education. This is why, among the Syrians as among the Latins, newspapers and publishing houses were founded as well as schools. *The Kerala Times*, for instance, was the organ of the Latin Catholics.

The Role of the Church

It would however not be possible to understand the position of the Catholics without taking into account the importance of the ecclesiastical organization itself. For the institutional framework provided by the Church played a considerable role in it. Indeed an organized and institutionalized leadership existed among them much more definite and unambiguous than in any other group, including that of the Orthodox. This leadership included priests, brothers and women religious, a whole, religious personnel occupied in full-time service of the group and not only concerned with its spiritual needs but also performing other functions, especially after the ecclesiastical institution embarked on more intensified social and cultural activities. It is unnecessary to analyse here the type of leadership provided by the ecclesiastical apparatus. This varied, besides, with the occasion. For a long time, for instance, the Catholics were not encouraged to learn English, which was not taught in the Catholic educational system, since this was the language of the Protestant civil authorities and so involved the danger of access to a profane culture damaging to the Catholic faith. This is why the Latin Catholics were later than the Orthodox in entering the administration and the liberal professions.

The contents of certain pastoral letters of this period will enable us to understand the positions that were being defended. In the diocese of Quilon, for instance, the episcopal documents of the first quarter of the century were openly aimed at preserving the identity of the Catholic group. Thus one letter to the faithful of the diocese forbade any communication with non-Catholics. Another warned against the danger of subversive literature, and restated the Catholic doctrine on authority. A third reasserted the obligation of parents to send their children to Catholic schools⁸⁰.

On the other hand the foundation of vernacular—and later of English—schools, as also of hospitals, dispensaries and newspapers, was facilitated by the institutional network provided by the Catholic Church. Its international connections enabled it to receive aid from abroad which, in Kerala particularly, was to prove so vital.

Formation of Alliances

So far we have been analysing separately the various movements linked with the different castes or communities. To start with, of course each of these movements formed a separate entity with precise goals of an internal character. However, they were not totally isolated from each other, for alliances were formed between some of them, or between their leaders, and it is important for us to discover the significance of these. Undoubtedly one possible explanation for the formation of alliances was that it was a tactical measure adopted to bring pressure to bear on the political authorities. But we should also ask ourselves whether there were other elements more closely linked with the changes in the economic and social structure, which provided the basis for these alliances.

We have already noted the existence of some such alliances. For example, it was mentioned that the Malayali Memorial was signed by the *Nayars*, *Izhavas*, Syrian and Latin Catholics, Anglo-Indians and even a few *Nambudiris*. Sri Narayana Guru had formed a friendship with Chattampiswamikal, which showed itself in collaboration between the *Izhavas* and the *Nayars* for religious objectives. But these were not the only goals of the various attempts at collaboration. Mannam, for instance, the *Nayar* leader, and Ayyankali, one of the principal leaders of the *Pulayas'* *Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam*, both took part in some of the activities of the *Izhavas'* SNDP. As for the *satyagraha* aimed at the opening of the temple at Vaikom to lower caste Hindus, particularly the *Izhavas* and the *Pulayas*, the initiative in this case was taken by a *Nayar* K P Kesava Menon, and during the ten months of concrete action three *satyagrahis* walked daily along the temple road, an *Izhava*, a *Pulaya* and a *Nayar*.

The caste movements and those of the religious communities, Muslim or Christian, constituted a reaction to the changes introduced into the structure of society by the progressive transition to a capitalist mode of production. They arose mostly in Travancore, but also in Cochin, generally after a slight lapse of time, and in a different way again in Malabar because the social ensemble there, inherited by the East India Company from Tippu Sultan, was rather different from that in the other two kingdoms. The movements were based on caste-belonging, because the former social relations of production had strongly affected all types of behaviour, and because the reactions to a profound social transformation were, as is normal, translated in the first instance into a strengthening of group solidarity. In actual fact the division of these communities into small self-contained units, and their geographical isolation, had so far effectively prevented them (except in the case of the highest castes) from reaching any true caste consciousness above the level of the local unit. It was only with the intervention by the British that this new social phenomenon arose.

But there was another aspect to the situation which is clearly illustrated by the alliances. This is the elitist character of these social movements, whether the accent was placed on legal claims or on their religious character. Their leadership did not come from the masses; it was provided either by individuals who had already reached middle-class status in the new-type society, or by men of religion. This was because at the time when these movements were launched the conditions necessary for the existence of a true popular movement were not yet present. Although objectively speaking certain social groups did constitute the oppressed *classes*, they always defined themselves primarily in terms of *caste*. For the external signs expressing distances between the castes had not yet been abolished, and the struggle against these symbolic codes united all the members of the caste, whatever their place in the budding class structure. From this point of view, these movements take on many of the social characteristics of nationalist, regionalist or linguistic movements.

It must be added that an exploited peasantry is generally dispersed, because of the type of production in which they are engaged, and that this slows down the process of development of a class consciousness. In Kerala the beginnings of a plantation economy were delayed, at least in the south; and because when they started in the 1870's they employed a Tamil work-force in the expansion of coconut production for industrial purposes and for export, they did not lead to the concentration of large numbers of Kerala workers.⁸¹

There were, then, two bases for these alliances, one social and the other religious. The first was the new middle class, which had acquired a certain status through education, but whose functions were severely limited on account of the customs bound up with the caste system, which defined the type of position occupied by each individual in the earlier mode of production. The struggles undertaken by these movements had in common the desire both to break down this symbolic structure and to get certain laws changed, since these laws still presented numerous obstacles to any emancipation of individuals within their own group in the matter of access to the means of production. Such were the laws of succession, and so on. But in fact the only people who could and did benefit by these reforms were those who had already obtained middle class status, or who aspired to it. The great mass of the members of the lower castes would draw no advantage at all from the new situation. It was only later on that they would begin to realize this, and to join trade unions or political parties. The alliances must therefore be interpreted principally as the expression of a certain solidarity existing between the leaders, together with a few other persons who shared the same ideology and had similar interests, and who consequently developed common or parallel strategies. The mobilization of the masses, who played the part of their clients and supporters, was

(naturally) the condition necessary for their success.

These remarks are concerned with the social mechanisms set in motion by the dialectic of successive reactions during the period under review. They do not in the least imply that some of the leaders of the communities or castes were not men deeply devoted to the cause of their group and completely disinterested; most of them were quite unconscious of the processes that were taking place. It would be necessary for some of them to take a new analytical step in awareness—whether spontaneously or more systematically—before an organization of classes rather than of castes could arise. But indeed the very dynamic of these caste movements had, even in the midst of their contradictions, provided the conditions necessary for the development of a new generation of social movements.

The second basis for the alliances was religious, which is easy enough to understand. We have already noted that all the movements had religious leaders of exceptional stature, even though they had been only partially responsible for the birth and development of the organizations which arose from the reactions of the various groups to the new situation. However, the alliances between the castes did not acquire a religious character except where a dialectical relationship had been established between the activity of the Christian—and especially the Protestant—missionaries and the group which defined itself as Hindu, and was progressively becoming aware of its identity as such—or at least of certain common characteristics—in the face of Christian proselytism.

The Hindu renewal preached by the *Izhava* and *Nayar* religious leaders was oriented towards the abolition of the symbols of segregation between the castes, and the development of a religion that would be both more universalist and more personal. It corresponded well enough with the aspirations of the new middle classes and simultaneously promoted a change in the pollution laws which—in addition to their symbolic significance—imposed norms of social relationships that weighed very heavily on all the lower castes. The achievement of these religious aims marked the end of the religious movements as such. For the new middle classes had no further need of religion to continue their social advancement, while the social consciousness of the lower classes now gradually turned in another direction, this time towards the political field.

As we saw above, conversions to Christianity also played some part in these movements. They had affected mainly the *Pulayas* and other outcastes, and (to a much lesser degree) the *Izhavas*, though it is true that the threat of their conversion had been used as an argument to strengthen the hands of those working for the opening of the temples. The *Nayars*, the *Izhavas* and the *Pulayas* had all banded together to obtain this symbolic objective, and some others had also joined them. Thus in 1931 the Youth League of the *Nambudiris* declared itself in favour of the free entry of all Hindus into the temples, and on the occasion of

the demonstration for the opening of the Poliyam road to all the castes even *Nambudiri* women and a princess of Cranganore (a *Kshatrya*) were among the demonstrators. However, when some Christians declared their intention of joining the *satyagrahis* of Vaikom, Gandhi himself dissuaded them from doing so, since this was a question that had to be settled among the Hindus themselves. The opposition of the orthodox Hindus, recruited mainly from among the high castes, he said, should not be further inflamed by new provocation, such as the presence of Christians. At the same time certain Christians were themselves concerned with what they considered the dubious alliances between the *Nayars* the *Izhavas* and the *Pulayas*, whose own interests were so divergent, since they saw in them essentially a reaction to Christian proselytism.

Indeed, after the opening of the temples in Travancore in 1937, conversions to Christianity diminished very markedly, which shows what an important part was played by the religious factor among the lower castes and the outcastes. From this date some of the social functions previously performed by religion passed into other areas of social space, particularly into the fields of political, cultural or trade union organization.

While the opening of the temples marked the end of the religious period in the social movements, it also opened the way, to a greater extent than before, for their utilization by the middle classes. The organizations which had arisen from these movements now often united among themselves for the defence of class interests and became less and less capable of canalising the aspirations of the poorer sections of the castes, the whole of which they were supposed to represent²². Besides this, new movements were being launched. Nevertheless the strength of the belonging to a caste or to a group defined by its religion, such as the Muslims or the various kinds of Christians, was still far from having disappeared.

Conclusion

It was therefore clearly the introduction of the capitalist mode of production into Kerala society which both dethroned the caste system as the organizer of the relations of production and also started the chain of consequences, some of which provided the conditions necessary for the birth of the social movements which we had discussed earlier. These movements were obviously involved in this same dialectic. Their principal result was the breakdown of the preceding symbolic system, which had played such an important role in the reproduction of the relations of production. But they also offered the new middle classes a means of social advancement and of effective political action. It may seem paradoxical, but the end result was a highly increased caste consciousness in which the mass of the members of these groups attained a dimension that most of them had never perceived before.

We must add that while caste-belonging had benefited principally those who were already in a position enabling them to enter the middle classes, it had also been profitable to the other members: we need only think of the growth in literacy which was partly due to the schools and colleges founded by some of the caste organizations. However the groups which were already better placed on the caste ladder still had better chances all round. Thus the school networks of the *Nayar* and the Christians developed much more quickly than the others, while the *Pulayas* never attained a level of social success comparable to that of the *Izhavas*. New cleavages were also formed within several castes or religious groups, this time in function of a separation into different classes in the same caste or group.

We can now begin to grasp the complexity of contemporary Kerala society, in which such a variety of determinants are responsible for the often extremely subtle discriminations; in which important elements of lineage-based societies, of a caste system and of a class society co-exist. When we add to these the ethnic elements (Dravidian, pre-Dravidian, Aryan, Syrian, Arab, Moplah, Anglo-Indian) and the religious distinctions (Vishnuism, Shivaism, Islam, Judaism, Catholicism Protestantism, Anglicanism and Orthodoxy, without mentioning the internal distinctions within each of these group, such as those between the Syro-Malankara and the Latin Catholics) we begin to realize the snares into which an analyst may fall.

In this way, then, Kerala society entered into the capitalist mode of production, although the development of the latter far from eliminated many of the precapitalist social and cultural constructions. The principal sociological characteristic of this new period was the birth of class-society. We shall bring our analysis to a close here, hoping that we may have contributed to the building of a foundation for the interpretation of contemporary society in Kerala.

¹ P K Gopalakrishnan, *op cit.*,

² P K K Menon, *op cit.*, p 470.

³ E M S Namboodiripad, 'Perspective of the Women's Movement', *Social Scientist*, pp 40-41 (Nov-Dec. 1975), 2. In this he recounts his own family history and particularly the situation of his father's younger wives.

⁴ K Thulaseedharan Pillai, *op cit.*, p 113.

⁵ S Manickam, 'Moplahs of Malabar', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol 1, No 2-3 (Jan 1974), 'pp 268-270; Syed Mohideen Shah, 'Islam in Kerala' *History of Kerala*, Kerala History Association (manuscript).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 278.

⁷ A Aiyappan, *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village—a Study in Culture Change*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p 68.

⁸ M Gangadhara Menon, 'The Yakub Hasan Episode, prelude to the Malabar Rebellion, 1921, *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol I, No 2-3 (Jan 1974), pp 312-326.

⁹ *op cit.*, pp 110-140

¹⁰ S Manickam, *op cit.*, p 283.

¹¹ P K K Menon, *op cit.*, p 99.

- ¹² E M S Namboodiripad, *op cit.*, p 139.
- ¹³ P K Gopalakrishnan, *op cit.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ P Cheriyan, *The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society, 1816—1840*, C M S Press, Kottayam, 1935, p 67.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ K K Chandy, 'Early C M S Missionaries', *The St. Thomas Encyclopedia of India*, Trichur, Vol 2, 1973, p 95.
- ¹⁸ A Sreedhara Menon, *op cit.*, p 345.
- ¹⁹ F E Keay, *History of the Syrian Church in India*, S P C K, Madras, 1951, p 58.
- ²⁰ K K Chandy, *op cit.*, p 96.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p 96.
- ²² Rao Bahadur L K Anantakrishna Ayyar, *Anthropology of the Syrian Christians*, Cochin Government Press, 1926, p 214.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p 26.
- ²⁴ K K Chandy, *op cit.*, p 96.
- ²⁵ P K K Menon, *op cit.*, p 845.
- ²⁶ C P Mathen, *I Have Borne Much*, Ampthill, Madras, 1951, pp 34-41; Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847—1908*, University of Sussex Press, London, 1975, chapter IV.
- ²⁷ Nilhan Perumal, *The Truth about Travancore*, R J Ram & Co Madras, 1939, p 53.
- ²⁸ Rao Bahadur L K Anantakrishna Ayyar, *op cit.*, p 206.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p 257.
- ³⁰ *The Jubilee Souvenir*, Diocese of Quilon, Quilon, 1925, p 13.
- ³¹ Robin Jeffrey, *op cit.*, p 44.
- ³² Robin Jeffrey, *Social Scientist*, *op cit.*

BONAVENTURE SWAI

*Notes on the Colonial State with Reference to
Malabar in the 18th and 19th Centuries*

THERE HAS been much controversy over the nature of the colonial state as well as its utility. For many imperial historians the usefulness of the colonial state to the "natives" appeared so obvious that there was little need to justify its existence. The colonial state, it is said, imposed a pax hitherto unknown to the natives. In this regard then, says Hanna, the partition of Africa "was not the tearing apart of a previously united continent, for with the exception of a few native states like Buganda and Barotseland, effectively controlled by a powerful monarch, there was only a medley of little tribes, themselves lacking in effective organization." The lines of the partition could have been unfortunate, he argues, but the event introduced "the work of consolidation and unification" which was inherited by the colonized after independence.¹

The pax that such unification introduced, it is said, was almost unique, and benefited even the poorest under such colonial peace. Indeed historians have discovered documents in India, Kenya and Nigeria (and perhaps also in other places where colonial order reigned) which bear words of old men and women praising the colonial pax for the tranquility that ensued in the aftermath of colonial conquest.

ON THE COLONIAL STATE

With the rise of nationalism and nationalist history, however, there has appeared what Thomas Hodgkin calls a "form of dialectic,

exposing the inadequacies of these presuppositions (like Kant in the *Antinomies of Pure Reason*) by asserting the contrary." "Counter-propositions" have been levelled against the imperial stand of colonial peace. Stress has been placed on the essential barbarism of what Césaire has called "the civilizing hordes." On the point of colonial barbarity and violence, there seems to be a consensus among many colonial intellectuals.

Both positions may be true of the utility of the colonial state. If that is so then the colonial state manifested itself like a Sphinx, both humane and brutal. Professor Antony Low attempts to combine the two aspects in his analysis of imperial authority which he also calls colonial authority.

He argues that there are many studies on colonial administration, indirect rule, imperial expansion and its rejection in the form of nationalism but these preoccupations skirt the issue of colonial authority. Of late studies in nationalism have been radicalized to include resistance movements and rebellions,² but Low queries; "what of the long intervals when there was next to none such."³ "The essential issue in all this" he says, "can be very simply illustrated with just one question. How was it possible that 760 British members of the ruling Indian Civil Service could as late as 1939, in the face of the massive force of the Indian national movement led by Gandhi "hold down" 378 million Indians." There is a need, he urges, to know how colonialism was accepted before we can understand the manner in which it was rejected. The key to this lies in the study of imperial authority.⁴

Imperial authority was associated with two other concepts: initial imperial situations and intensity of power. Initial imperial situations determined the aura of traditional legitimacy which contributed to the establishment of imperial authority while the intensity of power which passed from influence, through control to sway was used as a yardstick in gauging the gravity of such authority. The gathering of aura of legitimacy determined the kind of nexus established between imperial authorities and traditional rulers. Added to this, other ingredients which went into the building of imperial authority were force, which eventually brought about the colonial pax, the strength and efficiency of the colonial bureaucracy, charismatic qualities of imperial rulers, and so on.⁵

Nature of Collaborative Mechanisms

Indeed there has been some debate, albeit not all that noisy, about whether collaborative mechanisms were more important than violent means in the establishment of imperial authority. Four Cambridge historians, Stokes, Seal, and especially Robinson and Gallagher, have argued that collaboration was very important in the establishment of imperial authority.⁶ Indeed, argues Robinson, what determines that a country will eventually be colonized and, eventually, when it will be

decolonized is the collaborative mechanism. Colonization occurs when the initial collaborative mechanisms fail, but colonial rule depends on new forms of collaboration whose subsequent failure determine when colonialism is to be dislodged.⁷

In this regard, colonialism is viewed as an alliance between imperial and local forces, an alliance which is dictated by the small number of "the men on the spot", and the tendency by the imperial factor to economize its efforts which were nonetheless meagre.⁸ Yet there is confusion on what constitutes the collaborators and the collaborative mechanism. Collaborators could broadly be divided into two; traditional and modern. They varied from traditional chiefs, landlords, policemen, to the most sophisticated western educated elite.⁹

For some scholars it has proved somewhat puzzling whether policemen who manned the coercive apparatus of the colonial state can also be regarded as collaborators. Implied in such an enigma is the belief that collaboration and violence cannot coexist since the former is preservationist while the latter is destructive. However, it has been argued that the collaborative mechanisms apart, troops and the police played a pronounced role in the imposition of colonial rule as well as in its preservation. The police in particular played a very pronounced role during the nationalist phase battling with mass movements, strikes, and so on.¹⁰

Dualism of the Colonial State

Nationalist historians, however, have found it hard to imagine how the colonized could have accepted colonialism unless they were misled into such alliances. Moreover, it has been said, collaboration was a term coined during the Second World War to denote alliances established between Nazi occupation forces and fifth columnists in various European countries. Nevertheless what is missing in these propositions and counter-propositions is the element of dual power which is implied in the concept of collaboration. Such dualism denotes the existence of two sets of power: traditional and modern. The duty of colonial power was therefore to preserve the traditional centres of power and slowly wean over the natives to the modern centres of power. The activities conducted in the encapsulated systems have been termed "the politics of encapsulation,"¹¹ and that at times those who manipulate the traditional centres of power can immobilize the colonial administration.¹²

Dualism also continues to entice Marxists like Kay. Kay perceives capital in two forms: industrial and merchant. While the former is dominant in the metropolis, he argues, the latter prevails in the Third World. Merchant capital does not enter the sphere of production, and its ambiguities in the underdeveloped world have been shown in terms of coexistence of the modern and the traditional, the capitalist and the pre-capitalist. Such ambiguities, Kay argues, are also found in the

colonial state. As well as its subordinative and military oligarchy (instruments necessary for transforming the natural or pre-capitalist economies and integrating them under imperialist hegemony), the colonial state, according to Kay, is "a centralized political authority upholding private property" but resting its power, "in part at least, on local groups whose own power originated in non-capitalist forms of society." The colonial state is a "curious paradox": a capitalist state "with deep roots in non-capitalist societies which ... (it is forced) to protect as the foundation of.. (its) power." The paradox of the colonial state, therefore, it might be concluded, is this curious duality of its power.¹⁸

Hamza Alavi however argues that the apparent segmentary nature of the colonial state is in reality a hallmark characteristic of pre-capitalist politics.¹⁴ Localized production and appropriation which is also found in pre-capitalist politics in the form of "parcellization of sovereignty"¹⁵ as reflected in the dialectic between central and peripheral authorities in which the true locus of power is with local potentates disappeared with the imposition of the bourgeois revolution in the aftermath of the colonial takeover. Alavi therefore writes that:

...the colonial regime subordinated the power of the local lords, under its own structure of institutionalized power within the framework of its colonial bourgeois state. It is in the light of that critical and decisive change that I wrote sometime ago that the bourgeois revolution in the colonies was already accomplished by the imperialist bourgeoisie, which created in the colonies a bourgeois state and bourgeois property and a bourgeois legal and institutional apparatus precisely as an integral and necessary component to its economic domination.

The centralization of power, it may be said, is dictated by the very nature of the economy imposed on the colonies. This takes the form of the disarticulation of the pre-capitalist modes of production and their integration under imperialist hegemony.

Penetration of Capitalism

The social formations produced as a result of this process are capitalist because they are dominated by the capitalist mode of production. The so-called modern and traditional institutions of the colonial state are employed to bring about this domination, that is to restructure the pre-capitalist methods of exploitation and to bring them in line with the demands of capitalist accumulation. Like Usman therefore, Alavi insists on the fundamental transformation which was brought about by colonial rule, a term which is a euphemism intended to hide the reality of capitalist penetration. Both therefore agree that the preservationist tendencies of colonialism were mythical and imaginary since they were intended to maintain an illusion of slow and gradual change, and

therefore continuity, when there was in reality discontinuities and fundamental transformations.

Such fundamental changes, according to Alavi were shown in the sphere of land ownership in India. In Mughal India, land was controlled by landlords by virtue of conquest rather than as property under bourgeois law. Land was an aspect of rulership. Control of labour rather than land *per se* was thus of great importance. The use of coercive mechanisms for the extraction of surplus therefore, was significant if tenants were to be held down on the land. The British in India, however, introduced fundamental changes in the concept of land for in the course of time, land became property. The direct control of labour was thus not as significant as it had been before. In Malabar for example, land was being turned into a commodity for sale by the 1830s,¹⁶ with consequent traumatic effects on the relations between agrarian classes as evidenced in the Moplah tenant revolts which started in the same period.¹⁷

The introduction of such revolutionary changes was associated with land revenue collection which in turn necessitated the control of Indian political institutions to ensure the establishment of conditions of law and order requisite for the demands of the East India Company.¹⁸ It was also with the control of Indian political institutions by the administration of the East India Company that the Indian economy was disarticulated and integrated under capitalist hegemony. This took most of the first half of the nineteenth century, during which time the commercial affairs of the East India Company were bolstered by its association with the China tea trade.¹⁹

Paternalist Ideology

The Indian political institutions were therefore fundamentally transformed, but one question still remains: were the traditional survivals imaginary? Two schools of thought which have concerned themselves with various aspects of the colonial state should now be clear. The paternalist school which insists on the viability of indirect rule and collaborative mechanisms in colonial situations, and what Lucy Mair has called the Chamberlain school²⁰ which is innovative²¹ and thus does not insist so much on the survival of traditional institutions as a condition for the viability of the colonial state.

Embedded in the former school is the ideology of paternalism which in the colonial context is preservationist and presupposes the dependence of the colonial factor on local potentates in the imperial equation.²² It relegates the use of violence to the background for it assumes the relative weakness of the colonial factor.²³ The district officers whom it is assumed constitute the frontier of the colonial factor are regarded as guardians, a caste of rulers in the platonic sense. The creation of such guardians for the British empire began with the Cornwallis reforms of 1793 which excluded colonial administrators from the

mundane affairs of trade with a view to making the administration of the East India Company "responsible."²⁴ More was to be done later with the establishment of the public school system where such guardians received their training. In Low's typology of colonial authority paternalism is found in the imperial attempts to gather the aura of legitimacy, the establishment of colonial peace, the charisma of colonial officers, and so on.²⁵

"Colonial violence", on the other hand, has been emphasized with a view to placing the collaborative mechanism within a broader perspective, but the concept of dualism which is the hallmark of the thesis of collaboration remains, albeit in a twisted fashion. In such a situation, the role of intermediaries who at times acquire an independence of their own becomes important.²⁶ The colonial state still remains like a Sphinx and the debate tends to become metaphysical. Here there is no chance of Yes becoming No and the vice versa; Yes remains Yes and No remains No. Counter-questioning, counter-propositions, counter-arguments and counter-factualization become dominant. In such debates the dialectic of the state, and of the colonial state for that matter is missed. That, unfortunately, is the major weakness of those studies which have dealt with the colonial state.

Alienated Politics

Marx characterized the state as a false universality because it promoted interest of specific classes in the name of the people as a whole. The universal state exists only in appearance, and that in reality it is a class state. The interests of the majority are alienated and absorbed into the universal. The state therefore is that institution which claims primary responsibility for reproducing alienated politics. It is one and at the same time a false universality and an instrument for promoting class politics.

The form in which alienated politics developed in the metropolitan politics differed from that in the colonial politics. In the former, the process of alienation was mediated by the politics of competition in which people were regarded as individuals who entered the game of politics largely to promote their own individual interests. In the colonies this process was mediated by the maintenance of traditional politics as an arena different from that of modern politics.

The maintenance and reproduction of traditional political institutions like castes, tribes, and so on, in Malabar in the epoch of imperialism was intended to restructure and maintain relations of exploitation favourable to imperialist plunder. This, however, was the level of imposition; reproducing traditional politics in a new epoch. The level of alienation could be likened to the transformation of the Malabar political institutions so as to suit the demands of the administration of the East India Company. In this process of alienation and imposition,

politics which takes the form of relations of cooperation or otherwise between people could be dismissed as traditional and thus demanding more of the paternal care of the colonial state. In this regard, the internality of imperialism as well as the disarticulation of the pre-capitalist modes of production and their integration under imperialist hegemony is obfuscated. Conflicts which are a result of the transformation of the pre-capitalist modes of production are nonchalantly explained away as tribal politics,²⁷ caste politics or traditional politics.²⁸ The following section is intended to show the transformation which occurred in the political institutions of Malabar district in the aftermath of the imposition of colonial rule in 1792. The transformation cannot be reduced to mere displacement, domination or creation of new local authorities as Low argues in the case of initial imperial situations which determine the nature of colonial authority.²⁹ The transformation was fundamental, and the continuation of the reproduction of traditional institutions should be viewed within the problematic of alienation and imposition of power which is characteristic of the dialectic of the state.³⁰

FROM RAJAS TO JENMIS: COLONIAL RULE IN MALABAR

Under the British,³¹ Malabar district comprised the territory on the Malabar coast between Cochin and Canara, the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats. Following the Third Anglo- Mysore War between Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792, Malabar district was ceded to the Bombay Presidency under whose tutelage it remained until 1800 when it was transferred to Madras Presidency.

The Beginning of Trade with Britain

The British who had been involved in the commercial affairs of the Malabar coast buying the "black gold", pepper, from Moplah merchants, local traders who claimed Arabic origins, for most of the seventeenth century established a trading post, factory, at Tellicherry in 1694. A similar post had been built at Travancore a decade earlier. This was to be followed by another factory at Calicut some time later.³²

Permission to build a factory at Tellicherry was obtained from Vadakkalankur, Prince Regent of the Raja of Kolatunad, the Kolattiri. The chief factor of Tellicherry, also simply referred to as the Chief of Tellicherry slowly gained influence in North Malabar and by the 1750s he controlled the forts of Durmapatam, Attarah, Codota, Cuna and Malure which were located on the Island of Durmapatam; the Eddicot Fort which was built in 1737 to prevent "unauthorized" export of pepper from Randattara; the Grove Island Fort, the Madacarra Fort, the Kudali Fort; the Moracoona Fort; the Milian Fort in the Kurangoth Nair's territory and various other small fortifications and watch-towers like those of Cochincunda and Mount Delli.³³ Such influence, other arguments to the contrary,³⁴ was necessary for the maintenance of commercial

dominance on the coast.⁸⁵ The British were in Malabar not for trade alone after all.⁸⁶

Similar political influence was noticed in South Malabar which was under the sway of the Zamorin, the Raja of Calicut. Such political influence on which British commercial dominance depended, however, was soon shattered following Haidar Ali, the Nabob of Mysore's conquest of Malabar. Commercial monopoly, the hallmark of mercantilism, could no longer be enforced in the various kingdoms under British influence. Private traders of whom Murdock Brown was to be the quintessence were no longer under the obligation to sell their pepper, which they bought in the course of participating in the country trade, to the British East India Company.

Three wars therefore had to be fought with the Nabob of Mysore, Haidar Ali, and subsequently Tipu Sultan who bore the title of Tiger of Mysore before the British could feel secure in their control of the Malabar pepper trade again. Control of Malabar pepper was becoming more important notwithstanding the Mysorean disruption of it. This was so because while the company had depended upon the export of cotton piecegoods to England for its commercial survival in the first half of the eighteenth century, the industrialization of England in the second half of that century which was based to start with on the production of a similar commodity and the imposition of tariffs against Indian cotton piecegoods forced the Company to look elsewhere for trade. The Company could have reversed the carrying trade by exporting British cotton piecegoods to India, but the oriental natural economy had yet to be disarticulated and placed securely under imperialist hegemony.⁸⁷ The discovery of the China tea trade, however, gave the East India Company a new lease of life. India was turned into a source of goods to be exchanged for the China tea. British cotton piecegoods could not be exported to China because as Lord Marcatney was told by the Chinese emperor, China was not interested in such goods as she had them in abundance. The substitute was found in Bengali opium, Malabar pepper, and Gujarati raw cotton.⁸⁸ The British annexation of Malabar therefore needs to be perceived within this problematic rather than in terms of the turbulent frontier theory⁸⁹, the quagmire theory,⁹⁰ or the sheer perseverance of the men on the spot.⁴¹

Annexation of Malabar District

The annexation of Malabar district was received with much optimism by the factors of Tellicherry. The Chief of Tellicherry at that time, Taylor, saw the occasion as providing an opportunity for "reserving solely for the Company" the pepper, and the sandalwood and cardamoms produced in the district, "the former for China and the latter for the European markets."⁴² The Governor of Bombay Presidency, Abercrombie, however emphasized that "to derive the advantages" of

commerce and revenue extraction from Malabar, which he regarded as part of "the British right of conquest", there should be a "regular system of government" to ensure the exercise of British control.⁴⁸ The Governor General of British India, Lord Cornwallis, and Abercrombie therefore appointed a Commission of four which they called the Malabar Commission to look into the affairs of the district and establish such an administration.

The task was somewhat daunting for the four Commissioners in Malabar.

... experience (they observed) proves that with the mildest and most humanised inhabitants, the legal powers of the British government are so much weak, ... where there is no principle in the human mind but fear we know that amongst the most subjected people the terror of a despotic government is requisite... the despotic powers of Rajahs and the prompt unimpeded exercise of them are and for a long time will be alone sufficient for the protection of life and property.⁴⁴

The Commissioners were conscious of the fact that they could not police the countryside in Malabar alone and that administration through the Rajas was necessary.

The place of local rulers in colonial administrations remains controversial especially if perceived within the conservation-innovation problematic.⁴⁵ It has been said that after Robert Clive conquered Bengal and attempted to install British control he remarked: "When we first embraced the political system now established, it was with diffidence; when we entered on the correction of abuses and punishment of misconduct, it was with reluctance."⁴⁶ Preservation rather than innovation was the motif of his rule and this, it is said, was continued during the tenure of Warren Hastings—who was the first Governor General of India.⁴⁷

Innovation was begun by Cornwallis and intensified by administrators like Bentinck who were Utilitarians at heart.⁴⁸ Even so it has been remarked that such innovation did not go very far save in the Presidency towns of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta where the modern elite emerged. The innovation of Cornwallis and the Utilitarians and the preservationist philosophy of Munro, and others were therefore similar if assessed in terms of their results.⁴⁹

The Compromise with Local Rulers

Cornwallis had attempted to cleanse the Indian administration of its native officials by anglicizing it.⁵⁰ He, however, had to compromise with the Zamindars, among other local potentates.⁵¹ Munro, however, was less radical in approach.

When we have determined the principles (he said), the next question is, by what agency it is to be managed? There is no doubt that it ought, as far as practicable, be the native... It is strange to observe

how many men of very respectable talents have seriously recommended the abolition of native and the substitution of European agency to the greatest possible extent. I am persuaded that every advance made in such a plan would not only render the character of the people worse and worse, but our Government more and more inefficient. The preservation of our dominion in this country requires that the higher offices, civil and military, should be filled with Europeans; but all offices that can be left in the hands of the natives without danger to our power might with advantage be left to them. We are arrogant enough to suppose that we can with our limited numbers do the works of a nation. Had we ten times more, we would only do it so much worse. Were we to descend to those which are more humble and now filled by natives, we should lower our character and not perform the duties so well. The natives possess, in a high degree at least as Europeans, all those qualifications which are requisite for the discharge of the inferior duties in which they are employed. They are in general better accountants, and are altogether more efficient than we are of the business.⁶²

The natives, Munro argued, are in no way inferior to Europeans in talent, and "if it be admitted that the natives often act wrong, it is no reason for not employing them; we shall be oftener wrong ourselves," only that "what we do wrong is not noticed, or but seldom or slightly; what they do wrong (however) meets with no indulgence!" That the Indians seem "a low-minded, deceitful, and dishonest race," he said, is due to the fact that the British administrators were trying to disassociate them from the administration. Such a trend, according to Munro, was very demoralizing.⁶³

The weakness of the colonial administration, among other things therefore forced Munro to compromise with the native officials. That too has been given as the main reason for the colonial dependence on native officials notwithstanding the innovative policies of Cornwallis, the Utilitarians, the Evangelicals, and the advocates of the doctrine of *laissez faire*.⁶⁴ Weakness of the colonial administration, however is rather unconvincing for it begs the question: why could the colonial administration not be made stronger if all that mattered was the lack of more British personnel?⁶⁵ Implied in such an argument is the humanitarian tendency of the colonial administration which is assumed to be paternalistic. The nature of the colonial administration which is an empirical manifestation of the colonial state, however, needs to be analyzed in relation to the character of the relations of exploitation which it helped to enforce.⁶⁶

The Company and the Country Trade

In the years between the suicide of Clive in 1774 and the impeachment of Warren Hastings in 1788⁶⁷ the government of the East India

Company in India was brought under closer control of the British government not only because it was feared that by virtue of obtaining such a big territory the Company was getting out of hand but also to ensure that its commerce was brought under closer control lest it ruined the British cotton industry. This was to a very large extent a wish of British industrialists.

The subsequent growing interest in the China tea trade, thanks to the emergence of the British as a nation of tea drinkers, introduced a new feature in the East India Company's system of commerce. Country trade which was a preserve of employees of the Company in their capacity as private traders was expanded to include trade between India and China. Thus private traders could exchange Indian products for tea in Canton, but this tea which was exported to Europe was sold to the Company. At this level the tea entered the circuit of the so-called Company trade which in turn acted as bankers to the private traders who could be paid in rupees in India or pounds sterling in London for what they sold to the Company.⁵⁸

East India Company's commercial interests in India therefore were becoming indirect given the dominant position of private traders in the country trade. The East India Company was being turned into a state to enforce conditions favourable to the activities of the private traders. As a state the Company had to assume a mental position necessary for its survival in this new capacity. The talk about "responsibility", innovation, and preservation which dominated the first century of British rule in India when the Company had to depend on the country trade which was indispensable for the China tea trade has to be perceived thus. Changes came later with the introduction of the railway which allowed the cultivation and exportation of cheap and bulky goods as raw materials for British industries.⁵⁹

In Malabar, as in other parts of British India therefore, the first century of the East India Company's rule was dominated by the need to maintain conditions necessary for the continuation of the country trade which was indispensable for the China tea trade. Land revenue which the British claimed from the Indian cultivators by right of conquest became of primary importance in financing the administration. This in turn entailed greater control of Indian politics and destruction of the segmentary nature of these political systems if the Indian natural economy was to be disarticulated to an extent that would have allowed the provision of luxury goods necessary for the country trade.

Re-emergence of the Malabar Rajas

In Malabar district the initial stages of political subordination were channelled through the Malabar Rajas. The Mysoreans had introduced their own system of administration in Malabar. In South Malabar even the Rajas and many of their subordinates were displaced. These in

turn found refuge in Travancore. With the defeat of the Mysoreans on the Malabar coast in 1790, the emigres returning to Malabar who wanted to turn the clock back to the pre-1766 era hurried many of the Karnat-aka and Tamil Brahmins out of the land and so destroyed the Mysorean administration.⁶⁰

With the destruction of the Mysorean administration, the Malabar commissioners had to make settlements with the Rajas, but the Commissioners were faced with the problem of determining who the real Rajas in Malabar were. The Malabar political systems were segmentary. Power, appropriation of surplus and status were parcellized. Real power in many cases lay with the local elites, and there was constant friction between central and local power. Central power waxed as local power waned and vice versa.

It is said that in 825 AD when the last of the Perumals, Chera-man, left the Pan-Keralan (Chera) Raj for Mecca, the control of the Malabar coast relapsed to a multitude of small chiefs often at war with one another. In Malabar "proper", the most important of these chiefs were the Zamorin of Calicut and the Kolattiri of Kolathunad. Both of these chiefs increased their power at the expense of the neighbours and by the fifteenth century the Zamorin controlled a large portion of South Malabar, and the Kolattiri controlled most of the region north of the Kottah river called Kolathunad. Taking the Kolathunad political cluster as an example, this region was administered by two prominent ranks of officials: the ordinate rank of the princes of the Kolattiri house, and the subordinate rank of vassals or lesser rajas.⁶¹ The Kolattiri as head of the ordinate rank ruled the middle portion of Kolathunad which was also called Chirakkal with the assistance of two princes called the Nalamkur and the Anchamkur. Northern Kolathunad was administered by the Vadakkalankur, the Northern Regent, and the Southern region was ruled by the Tekkalankur, the Southern Regent. The rest of Kolathunad, the extra-Kolathunad cluster, was ruled by the Kolattiri's vassals who were also called the lesser rajas.

The Lesser Rajas

The lesser rajas were also called *naduvazhis*⁶² who were heads of nads, districts. Below the *naduvazhis* were still lesser rajas called *desavazhis* who were heads of desams or hamlets.⁶³ Below the *desavazhis* was another rank of officials called *mukhyastans* or respectable people. Most of these Rajas and lesser rajas belonged to the Nair caste and were landlords of consequence, also called *Jenmis*. The land was tilled by tenants of which there were various gradations. The Rajas, notwithstanding their political offices were *jenmis* who together with their fellow landowners constituted the ruling class in Malabar. Much of the surplus on which they depended came not from land revenue collection, which save for the Mysorean period was unknown in Malabar, but from rents

levied on tenants. Parcellization of sovereignty which was reflected in the segmentation of control of arms between Rajas and lesser rajas was accompanied by parcellized surplus appropriation and authority. The Rajas and lesser rajas controlled the same kinds paraphernalia of status, albeit depending on the strength of the Rajas, those of the lesser rajas were not as prominent.⁶⁴

Notwithstanding the struggle between the Rajas and lesser rajas to align with the East India Company, the Commissioners settled with the Rajas out of the belief that a dozen or so rulers were easier to control than too many of them. To recognize the rights of the lesser rajas, the Commissioners feared,

...might militate against the rights of the company to the detriment of the revenue and stability of the country.

Many of these...(lesser rajas) possessed in their different districts the same rights as to justice and revenue which the rajahs had themselves and were totally exempted from tribute, but as the continuance of such a system would only tend to create confusion in the revenue (sector) and disturbances in the country we direct that the claims to them be disallowed and that these...(lesser rajas) contribute to the Revenue in the same manner as any other person holding landed property.

The Commissioners also said that if the lesser rajas refused to recognize the rights of the senior Rajas to collect land revenue, military aid should be given to "the different rajahs to enforce" this right.⁶⁵

The Commissioners declared that "all rights of sovereignty enjoyed by Tippoo"⁶⁶ "are vested in the Company" which would "exercise it by appointing their own amils to collect revenue and exercise the criminal and civil administration of justice."⁶⁷ But Tipu Sultan did not enjoy the unified sovereignty imagined by the Commissioners. Under Tipu, sovereignty still remained parcellized. The struggle which ensued as a result of the different perceptions of sovereignty which took the form of struggle for control of surplus dominated most of the first decade of British administration in Malabar. It was evidence of the fundamental transformation being introduced in the Malabar politics.

Rajas' Conflict with the Commissioners

The Zamorin was the first Raja to show his inability to control land revenue under the terms imposed by the Malabar commissioners. In October 1792 he told the Commissioners that:

By the ancient customs of Malabar the Nayars held their lands free; they paid no revenue to any one, but they were obliged to attend their Rajas when called on to war.

Furthermore the Nairs, the Zamorin maintained,

...think that my government has returned, and they hope to be relieved of all the oppression of Tippu. To this I am obliged to

reply that the country and the government is with the Company whose armies must protect it; that unless they willingly contribute to the expense of maintaining them according to what is just, the country may go back to Tippu and instead of living in peace under the shadow of the Company all our troubles and vexations may return and we may be driven back into the Travancore country.

This I tell them; but after all, you know they are not like the people of other countries who live collected in cities where the hand of the government can reach them and the tax-gatherer has an easy task. They live in the woods and in the hills, with every house separate, and that house defensible.⁶⁸

The Zamorin could collect land revenue as required by the administration of the East India Company because he neither had the authority nor the machinery to do so.⁶⁹ Further pressure by the Commissioners stimulated intensive "friction between the agents of the Company and those of the Rajas."⁷⁰

Rajas had to be hostile to the so-called foreign Brahmans many of whom came from Mysore and Tamilnadu because they were agents of the British policy of centralization. The restrictions which were being placed on the Rajas so as to turn them into efficient tools of revenue collection were too burdensome. The outrage of the Malabar Rajas showed itself most clearly in 1795 when the Managing Raja of Chirakkal informed one of the British administrators, Handley, that he intended to hold a coronation ceremony of the Senior Raja, the Kolattiri. Many of the Malabar Rajas had held such ceremonies in 1792 or earlier on their return from Travancore. The Rajas of Chirakkal, however, wanted to hold theirs in 1795 because, the Managing Raja told Handley, according "to customs of this place, the goddess Sury Bagavadu of Mady being (their) patroness, he, the Colastry Raja... (could not) meet her and address her by means of prayer;" without in the first place performing the "Aryitto Vaicha."⁷¹ Handley and his colleague, Stevens, however, refused the Raja permission to hold the coronation because they felt that he intended to defy the authority of the "government of the ceded province" with a view "to attaining his former state of independence."⁷² More serious, perhaps, is the way that the Raja had addressed the letter for permission to hold the ceremony to Handley. The tenor of the letter was so disconcerting that it made Handley and Stevens wonder whether the Raja had forgotten "the difference between his relative situation with the Company at present" and at the time when the British were mere factors struggling to retain a stake in the spice trade on the Malabar coast.⁷³ The Raja of Chirakkal had addressed Handley as the Kottah Muppan (vassal) of Tellicherry, a title which was extensively in use before the annexation.⁷⁴ Since 1792, however, the Company was *Kaund*, paramount, and its officials considered the use of such a title an insult. The Raja, however, said that he had no particular reason for having

addressed Handley thus, but he had not received "the smallest order" prohibiting him "to write according to that ancient custom", and in any case he said, if it was now felt that "none of the former customs is to be observed, let it be so."

Kerala Varma's Revolt

Rajas who were appointed to manage the affairs of the Company complained within the system and tried to retain as much of the powers which were being taken away from them as possible. Those who were excluded from the administration revolted. That was the case with one of the Rajas of Cotiote, Kerala Varma. The revolt is important because it influenced the nature of class alignment in Malabar under the British, as well as the intensity of control established in the district.

Kerala Varma's revolt should be explained in terms of the nature of political segmentation in Cotiote within the hierarchy of Rajas, a point which has already been discussed in relation to the samastanom of Kolatunad, as well as the sections with which the British allied in the course of establishing political control. This determined which sections of the political hierarchy lost in the new alignment of power, as well as the struggle to come back to power by the use of force.

Popularly called Pazhassy Raja, Kerala Varma belonged to one of the three palaces of the Cotiote ruling house called Padinyaru (Western) Kovilagam located at Pazhassy. The eldest male member of the three palaces was called the Senior Raja of Cotiote. The Senior Raja had no specific executive powers in the government of Cotiote which extended to Wynad, Tamarasseri and Parapnad. The second eldest male controlled the administration of Cotiote taluk. The third and fourth acted as vice-regents in the administration of Wynad, the rugged taluk on the Western Ghats, and Tamarasseri, a division of the taluk of Kurumbranad which was transferred to Cotiote in 1756 by its ruler, Rama Mungelah. The fifth male member of the house of Cotiote administered Parapnad.

Consequent upon the end of the second Anglo-Mysore war when the Mysoreans resumed the administration of Malabar, the Senior Raja effected some changes in the Cotiote political hierarchy. Since he wanted to return to Travancore and the second eldest Raja, Vira Varma, was reluctant to protect the people of Cotiote against the maladministration of the Mysoreans, the Senior Raja appointed Kerala Varma to take up this charge and Vira Varma's position in the Cotiote political hierarchy was accordingly diminished to the fourth place, which made him the ruler of Tamarasseri. Although he "kept bands of predatory people", who from time to time "attacked Tippoo's government" in Malabar, Kerala Varma, now styled the Raja of Cotiote, and his followers spent most of their time in the "jungles of Palnim and Manattana." Following Tipu Sultan's attack on Travancore, Kerala Varma signed a treaty with

Taylor, the Chief of Tellicherry, which made him a British ally in the third Anglo-Mysore war.⁷⁶

The Surfeit of Rajas

But Taylor noticed that Kerala Varma was not the only person who claimed the right to sign the cowl as a representative of Cotiote. The claimants were many, and the Chief of Tellicherry remarked that "it would prove a matter of extreme difficulty to satisfy so many" persons, "and to keep them in any tolerable degree of unanimity."⁷⁸ Among those struggling for recognition was Vira Varma who was "always ready to grasp at personal advantage,"⁷⁷ and who, Logan observed was always "prepared to manage any district, belonging to other people provided that this was to his advantage."⁷⁸

Vira Varma signed an agreement with the British during the Third Anglo-Mysore war to defend Malabar. Subsequent to the Treaty of Seringapatam, he out-manoeuvred Kerala Varma by making a settlement with the Malabar Commissioners for the control of Malabar. The new mechanisms for land revenue collection eliminated the functions which Kerala Varma had in Cotiote. His objections to land revenue collection in Cotiote and the subsequent revolt has to be analysed from this perspective. Kerala Varma's letters to the Malabar administration showed his bitterness against the arrangements introduced by its agents. In one of these letters he asked:

Have you not written that it is not customary to take away the rights of another person, wherefore the right to possess the country which was given me by my ancestors will not be infringed.⁷⁹

Kerala Varma like the Managing Rajas wanted to be a collector of land revenue on behalf of the Company, for it was only in that way that he could have a share in the surplus being extracted from Malabar tenants. But the Managing Rajas were also disgruntled by the amount of control imposed on them.

In the course of dealing with Kerala Varma's revolt, as well as the problems in the collection of land revenue, the administration of the East India Company in Malabar came to distrust the Managing Rajas and decided to settle with the lesser rajas, largely *naduvazhis* and *desavazhis*. By the 1820s even these too had been displaced and new settlements were made with *Mukkyastans*. Meanwhile the Malabar Rajas had been reduced to *jenmis*, landowners of consequence.⁸⁰

Changes in the Instruments of Control

It is however important to note that what was happening in Malabar district was not a mere displacement of one layer of authority and settling with another.⁸¹ The institutions co-opted into the colonial bureaucracy were transformed fundamentally.⁸² Not only were they

transformed into instruments for land revenue collection on terms dictated by the collectorate administration of which they were a part, but that such paraphernalia of authority as for example the control of retainers which they formerly had were withdrawn. By the 1840s the Collector of Malabar district was contemplating on the possibility of imparting western education on these so-called traditional rulers.⁸³ In this regard the demarcation between modernity and tradition was being blurred.

In this connection the argument by one of the Malabar administrators, Richards, that "it is easier to govern good men than bad under all conditions" and "more profitable to govern a satisfied than a dissatisfied people", and that force is incompatible with the creation of such conditions⁸⁴ loses its meaning when it is remembered that the instruments of violence were now centrally controlled. This transformation turned the local potentates into mere agents of colonial administration which renders the dualism of power in colonies meaningless.

Jenmis and the Moplah Revolt

The position of local potentates vis-a-vis the administration of the district became clearer in the 1830s when following the Moplah tenant revolts against the *jenmis* they were called upon to enforce conditions favourable to the latter. Land system in Malabar before 1792 was based on the rights which tenants and the *jenmis* had to the land. The surplus extracted from the tenants was based more on the *jenmis'* control of their labour by coercive means rather than land ownership as property.⁸⁵ The imposition of the administration of the company which was based on bourgeois ethics as well as the declaration that forest-land, waste-land and the like belonged to the company, which meant that tenants no longer had open land for cultivation in case they disagreed with the *jenmis* over extortionate rent extraction, forced the former to be overdependent on the latter. This gave the *jenmis* the chance to violate the former rights which tenants had on the land. The *jenmis* supported their violation of the former "moral economy" by appealing to the new laws imposed by the Company which regarded land as property and labour as a commodity to be sold for wages. He who went hungry, it was now believed, was lazy. By the 1830s land in Malabar was being sold on the market.⁸⁶ The tenants were no longer assured of their livelihood as it had been under the "moral economy" of pre-British Malabar.

The tenants therefore went on the rampage. As well as Captain Watson's Corps⁸⁷ who were called forth to quell the disturbances by the Moplah tenants, the Malabar local potentates who in fact comprised part of the landowning class in Malabar, like the rest of the administration, went on the side of the *jenmis* and so enforced the conditions brought about by the bourgeois sense of justice as embodied in the law.

The Moplah tenants' disturbances have been regarded as religious

since those who participated in them were predominantly Muslims who believed that they were involved in a *jihad*.⁸⁸ But it has to be noted that their *jihad* was not that of proselytization but was intended to abolish exploitation, notwithstanding the fact that the *jenmis* were largely Hindu. There has been a tendency to dismiss politics, the decision by a group of people to cooperate or refuse to cooperate in accordance with the social relations imposed on them,⁸⁹ in the Third World (other than those of modern elites) as traditional. This is to fall victim to the colonizer-colonized problematic in which the colonizing agency is assumed to be the motor of civilization (modernization) to be emulated by the traditional sector.

Nature of the Colonial Society

It is assumed by many historians that modern politics in colonial societies began with outside contact; the rest was traditional and thus not amenable to analysis. Traditional politics, it would be said, is traditional, fanatical, xenophobic and so on. The answer is known even before the investigation starts.⁹⁰

The aim of colonial administration is therefore assumed to have been to preserve tradition through the process of collaboration, indirect rule and so on. Paternalism apart, the colonial factor in the imperial equation, it is said, was minimal: just enough to tip the scale in favour of the colonial administration. What such an account misses is the fact that colonisation has fundamentally altered the very fabric of many societies. And very rarely did the local colonial authorities succeed in over-throwing the coloniser.

Moreover the unity of the local colonial authorities was not all that possible since it was the "appearance" of the segmentary nature of the pre-capitalist political institutions which was successfully maintained. Thus while Frykenberg indicates that "In 1830...Guntur was governed by three Europeans and 1,368 Indians", he qualifies the statement by noting that

The significance of this extreme numerical disparity between Indians and Europeans was not as great as it seemed. When we look at the nature of social stratification and communal insulation within each local hierarchy, the ratio of Britons to indigenous leaders is not quite so imposing. Guntur had anything but a single homogeneous society. Its government was dominated at different levels and in different localities by different caste groups, almost as distinct from each other as they were from the British.⁹¹

While Desastha Brahmans controlled the Collectorate administration at the headquarters up to the level of Sheristadar, the senior most post that could be attained by an Indian in the early days of the British Raj, Niyogi Brahmans controlled the field administration to the village level. These positions were reproduced in their stratified and caste-like manner

for most of the colonial era: so much so that one Bengal Civilian was forced to ask: "Is there anything about Madras Collectorate that makes them so difficult that only a Maratha Brahmin can fathom it?"⁸²

False Universality of the Colonial State

Tribalism, casteism, or in a word, tradition, were reproduced by the colonial state in the epoch of imperialism as a false universality. "In the day to day practice", one scholar has noted in the case of the former Belgian Congo, "the politics of colonial rule were riddled with tribalism. So much so that when 'modern politics' were introduced most political parties organized themselves around tribal lives. The party leaders who emerged could only now have a social basis."⁸³ The leaders of the so-called modern politics responded to the false universality of the state and so had to react unfavourably to the revolts of workers and peasants which questioned its basis.⁸⁴

The false universality of the colonial state, however, was an aspect of imposition of power. Tradition which belonged to another epoch was transformed and imposed on the colonized people as if it was still in its pristine form. The transformation constitutes the alienation of power whose intensity depends on the nature of the relations of exploitation imposed.⁸⁵ This dialectic corresponds to the accumulation role of the state which is presented as being in the interest of all. The latter is the legitimating role of the state.

The apparent preservationist role of the state cannot therefore be dismissed as mythical. It is the level of appearance which if analyzed carefully leads us to a theoretical understanding of the state without which the state in its empirical manifestation is rendered somewhat tantalizing, paradoxical, and so on.

¹ A J Hanna, *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia, 1859-95*, Oxford, 1956, pv.

² Such studies have been conducted in an effort to recover the so-called African initiative in African history. See for example T O Ranger, *The Recovery of African Initiative in Tanzanian History*, Dar es Salaam, 1969.

³ D A Low "Lion Rampant," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, II, 1964, p 245.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ R Robinson and J Gallagher see the establishment of colonial power in terms of the failure of collaborative mechanisms which calls forth the establishment of new ones. See their book, *Africa and the Victorians*, New York, 1961. Eric Stokes attempts to summarize the thesis of this book in his "Traditional Resistance Movements and Afro-Asian Nationalism: the context of the 1857 mutiny rebellion", *Past and Present*, 48, 1970. See also R Robinson, "Non-European foundations of European imperialism: sketch for a theory of collaboration", Owen and Sutcliffe, *op cit.*, and A Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1968.

⁷ Robinson, *op cit.*

- ⁸ Stokes, *op cit.*
- ⁹ Seal, *op cit.*
- ¹⁰ D Arnold, "The Armed Police and Colonial Domination in South India, 1914—1947", University of Dar es Salaam, 1974; W Rodney "Policing the Countryside in Colonial Tanganyika", East African Universities Annual Social Science Conference, 1973; A Tansley, "The Publicity Department and Rural Development", University of Sussex, 1971.
- ¹¹ F G Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils*, Oxford, 1970.
- ¹² R E Frykenberg, *Guntur District*, Cambridge, 1965.
- ¹³ G Kay, *Development and Underdevelopment*, London, 1975, 105-7.
- ¹⁴ H Alavi, "India and the Colonial Mode of Production", *Social Register*, 1975. See also his previous article "The state in post-colonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh", *New Left Review*, 74, 1972.
- ¹⁵ This argument is brought out more clearly by P Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, 1973.
- ¹⁶ K Gough, "Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India", *Pacific Affairs*, XII, 1968-69.
- ¹⁷ S F Dale, "The Mappilla Outbreaks: Ideology and Social Transformation", *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXV, 1975.
- ¹⁸ Alavi, *op cit.*
- ¹⁹ V Pavlov, V Rastyannikov, and G Shirakov, *India : Social and Economic Development*, Moscow, 1975.
- ²⁰ L Mair, "Anthropology and Colonial Policy", *African Affairs*, 74, 1975.
- ²¹ Low, *op cit.*
- ²² Stokes, *op cit.*
- ²³ Robinson, *op cit.*
- ²⁴ P Woodruff, *The Men who Ruled India*, II, London, 1965, pp 18-22.
- ²⁵ Low, *op cit.*
- ²⁶ Stokes, *op cit.*, Robinson and Gallagher, *op cit.*
- ²⁷ S Marks, *Reluctant Rebellion*, Oxford, 1970.
- ²⁸ Reproduction of tribalism in the former Belgian Congo has been dealt with admirably by J Depelchin, "Zaire, 1960 — 1977; from colonialism to Mobutism", University of Dar es Salaam, 1977.
- ²⁹ Low, *op cit.*
- ³⁰ A Wolfe, "New Directions in the Marxist Theory of Politics", *Politics and Society*, 4, 1974.
- ³¹ Much of this section is extracted from my "The British in Malabar, 1792—1806", D Phil Sussex, 1974.
- ³² W Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Madras, 195, 2 volumes. For a straight forward account of the Moplah community on the Malabar coast see R E Miller, *Mappilla Muslims of Kerala*, Bombay, 1976.
- ³³ Malabar Joint Commission's Report, Malabar Collectorate Records, 1672 Tamilnadu Archives 4.
- ³⁴ P Moon, *Warren Hastings and British India* New York, 1962, argues that the British were in India for the sake of trade alone.
- ³⁵ Nightingale, *op cit.*
- ³⁶ R Mukherjee, *Rise and Fall of the British East India Company*, Berlin, 1956. For a more theoretical discussion of merchant capital and its monopolist tendency see relevant parts in K Marx, *Capital*, III Moscow, 1974.
- ³⁷ Pavlov, *et al op cit.*
- ³⁸ Nightingale, *op cit.*
- ³⁹ A lot has been written about the turbulent frontier as a factor in imperial expansion. See W D McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics*, 1865—75, London, 1967.

- 40 E S Gruen, "Roman Imperialism and the Greek Resistance", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, IV, 1973.
- 41 Nightingale, *op cit*.
- 42 Taylor to the Commissioners, 8 March 1793, MCRD 1674/TA. 11-13.
- 43 Abercrombie to Dick, 30 March 1792, Secret and Political Department Diary No. 43, Bombay Archives.
- 44 The Commissioners' Minutes, April 24, 1792, SPDD 43/BA.
- 45 I have argued this out in my recent paper, "Myth and Reality of the Empiricism of Colonial Empires with Examples from the British Overseas Empire", University of Dar es Salaam, 1977, mimeo.
- 46 Quoted by Low, *op cit*. 41.
- 47 Stokes, *op cit*.
- 48 E Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, Oxford, 1959.
- 49 See footnote No 47.
- 50 P J Marshall, "Indian Officials under the East India Company in Eighteenth-century Bengal", *Bengal Past and Present*, LXXXIV, 1965.
- 51 Low, *op cit*.
- 52 Thomas Munro and the Way to Govern India in W Digby, "Prosperous" *British India : a Revelation from Official Records*, Delhi, 1969, 39-40.
- 53 Sir Thomas Munro, "Minute on the Employment of Natives in the Public Service", 31 December 1824, G Bennett, ed. *The Concept of Empire*, London, 1953, 68-70.
- 54 Stokes, *op cit*.
- 55 Swai, "Myth and Reality of the Empiricism of Colonial Empires", *op cit*.
- 56 *Ibid*.
- 57 Quoted by G R Meller, *British Imperial Trusteeship*, 1783-1850, London, MGMLI, 22.
- 58 N K Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, I, Calcutta, 1966.
- 59 Stokes, *op cit*., Alavi, *op cit*.
- 60 Interview between the Commissioners and Singam Pillai, 25 January 1792, MCRD 1676/TA.
- 61 S J Shahani, "A Comparative Study of Traditional Political Organization of Kerala and Panjab," Ph.D, University of London, 1965.
- 62 Graeme's Report, MCRD 4037/TA. 11.
- 63 *Ibid*.
- 64 For land system in Malabar see E Miller, "Village structure in North Kerala", M N Srinivas, (ed. *India's Villages*, Bombay 1960; D M Schneider and K Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962; A G Mayar, *Land and Society in Malabar* London, 1952; D Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India*, Cambridge 1960.
- 65 Farmer to Taylor, ? October 1792, Revenue Department Diary No 11, Bombay Archives.
- 66 *Ibid*.
- 67 S P D D 43/BA.
- 68 *Ibid*.
- 69 *Ibid*.
- 70 *Ibid*.
- 71 Rama Varma to Handley, 18 January 1795, MCRD 2104/TA. 5.
- 72 Handley to Stevens, 31 January 1795, S P D D 49/BA.
- 73 Stevens to Handley, 14 January 1795; MCRD 210/TA. 3
- 74 Handley to Stevens, 13 January 1795, *Ibid* 2.
- 75 Oudhut Rai's interview with the Commissioners, M C R D 1879/TA.
- 76 MCRD 2562/TA. 4
- 77 Taylor to Farmer, ? October 1793, MCRD 2057/TA, 420.

- ⁷⁸ W Logan, (ed.) *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and other Papers of Importance Relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, Madras, 1951, 150.
- ⁷⁹ Kerala Varma to Wilkinson, 23 December 1796, MCRD 1723/TA. 38.
- ⁸⁰ Graeme's Report MCRD 4033/TA. 53.
- ⁸¹ The terms "layer of authority" and "displacement" are borrowed from Low, *op cit.*
- ⁸² This is a point which as we have already seen has been very much stressed by Usman, *op cit.*
- ⁸³ Sheffield to Board of Revenue, 31 August 1829, MCRD 4941/TA.
- ⁸⁴ Richards to Board of Revenue, 17 June 1803, MCRD/TA. pp 71—72.
- ⁸⁵ Alavi, *op cit.*, Kumar, *op cit.*
- ⁸⁶ Gough, *op cit.*
- ⁸⁷ This was a paramilitary police unit established by Capt. Watson to put down Moplah disturbances in the first decade of British rule in Malabar. I have dealt with Moplah disturbances of this period in section three of the third chapter of my thesis, *op cit.*
- ⁸⁸ Dale, *op cit.* Moplah rebellions of the 1830s and after differed fundamentally from those that ended in 1803 or thereabouts. See Swai, *op cit.*, and C Wood, "The first Moplah rebellion against British rule in Malabar", *Modern Asian Studies*, 10, 1976.
- ⁸⁹ Wolfe, *op cit.*
- ⁹⁰ See Marks, "Study of the Zulu rebellion," *op cit.*
- ⁹¹ R E Frykenberg "Elite Groups in a South Indian District: 1788—1858", *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIV, 1964—65. pp 261-262.
- ⁹² Quoted in *ibid.*
- ⁹³ Depelchin, *op cit.*
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ Swai, "Myth and Reality of the Empiricism of Colonial Empires...", *op cit.*

NOTES

Language Problem in Assam

THE LANGUAGE issue cannot be treated in isolation from the national question and more fundamentally from the co-relation of class forces existing in any social formation. It emerges along with the success of commodity exchange which integrates nations and creates the nation-state as the most convenient, profitable and normal arena for the play of capitalist relations¹. In its widest sense the national question embraces the entire complex of relationship between ethnic communities and above all between nations that have already been established, and those in the process of formation.² Language, therefore is part of a wider social question. Hence, the need to study the former in the wider context of the latter. This study is solely confined to the language problem in Assam. However, before going into a detailed study of Assam, we would try to examine the language problem in the context of: 1) The different historical stages through which the national problem in our country has evolved; 2) The multi-national character of the Indian Union; and 3) The uneven development of regions inhabited by various nationalities.

Colonialism and Underdevelopment

India was fully integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate colonial position during the nineteenth century. It emerged as a classical colony playing a crucial role in the development of British Capitalism.³ The colonial Indian economy was a part of world Capitalism which needs to be viewed as a single world-wide system. The historical process that led to this colonial integration invariably led to the underdevelopment of India.

The Indian capitalist class, in the strictly modern sense, arose during the British period. The Indian capitalist class gave broad support to the nationalist movement against Imperialism. They realized that the Indian people were politically restive and bent on anti-imperialist struggle because of their conditions of life, and because of their own contradiction with Imperialism. Further, it was clear that nationalist

political activity would continue and grow irrespective of capitalist participation and that therefore, the basic task before the capitalist class was to remain relevant to such a powerful social force and to try and establish their hegemony over its programme and organization and the pattern of struggle.⁴

Nationalism

Nationalism in the oppressed colonies has always been a complex articulation of two instances—the nationalism of the colonial bourgeoisie and the nationalism of the masses. This distinction is absolutely necessary for any understanding of the colonial question. The nationalism of the Indian bourgeoisie, the expression of a rising subordinate capital seeking to establish control over its state apparatus functioned simultaneously as a mechanism for paralyzing the revolutionary instinct of the masses, for splitting up their common front and incorporating the backward peasant strata into the bourgeois hegemonic block, represented politically by the National Congress. In short, it was not only a means of emancipating India from the clutches of British Capital and establishing local capitalist control over the home market but also a means of effectively excluding the working class from hegemony over the peasant masses, of insulating the flow of working-class ideas and controlling the nationalism of the Indian masses.⁵

The impact of British rule as well as the penetration of new forces did not take place at the same pace throughout the country. The conditions which led to the rise of political and national consciousness matured unevenly in different parts and among different communities. Hence it is appropriate to term the historical development of regional nationalities as the basic process on which British rule had been impressed and treat the product a modification of some aspects of the basic process of nationality development. The concrete issue of linguistic reorganization made its first official appearance in the 1917 Calcutta Congress Session. It was imperative for the Congress under Gandhi if it had to become a mass organization to channelise the sentiments of various nationalities and use the national languages as vehicles of political communication and propaganda. But the Congress all through the freedom movement never formulated a concrete plan of action but contented itself in assuaging nationality sentiments by passing resolutions and accepting the principle.

In the post-independence period many hitherto backward or less-developed minorities and linguistic groups have become conscious of their rights and put forward claims for the recognition of their distinct entity.

Multinational Character

India is a multinational state. It has various nationalities demarcated by language and culture. There are variations in the degree of

nationality formation dependent on the respective class formations within the nationalities themselves. But, all these nationalities have certain common patterns of development since the advent of capitalist relations under colonialism. The multinationality problem in India is further complicated by the existence of a number of castes and religious communities within these nationalities which become instrumental in the bourgeois game of divide and rule. These survive, either due to the backward nature of Indian capitalism or because of pre-capitalist survivals; but not as pre-capitalist homogeneous communities.

The uneven development of various regions inhabited by nationalities produce various social and economic tensions between the different regions and the centre. Historically, certain regions have developed under the impetus of specific changes, confined to the particular region. This historical fact, reflects itself in all spheres—literary, industrial, agricultural, and so on. These problems get further complicated in the process of economic development. The unevenness of capitalist development and the consequent regional economic imbalance is a characteristic feature of the Indian Union. The problem of unevenness is not confined to variations between nationalities alone but also within a particular linguistic nationality.

Language Problem in Assam

In Assam, we find that the relations between various linguistic groups are strained. Cultural nationalism and the bogey of an alien enemy have always served as instruments of the ruling classes to induce the masses to engage in fratricidal conflicts and overlook the real enemy. Thus off and on situations have been created which keep language tensions alive in Assam. The pattern of linguistic social conflict in each state is reflected not only in the number of language groups and their relative sizes but also in the degree of relatedness and distinction among them. The co-existence of closely related Bangali-Assamese communities in Assam has given rise to fierce rivalry that has so far defied solution. The historical, socio-demographic and economic background of Assam needs to be studied in order to understand the problem in the proper perspective. The state of Assam is located in the North-East corner of the Indian Union. It is a state of plains and hills. The Assam plains or Assam proper comprises the seven districts—Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Cachar.⁶ The Assam hills consist of five districts—Garó Hills, United Mikir and North-Cachar Hills, Mizo Hills and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The political map of Assam has undergone several changes since independence. As a result Assam of today is reduced to the Brahmaputra Valley and the Cachar district.

Prior to the advent of the East India Company, the Brahmaputra Valley was ruled by the Ahoms, an off-shoot of the *tai* or the great *shan*

stock of South-East Asia. In the 18th century the Kingdom was greatly weakened by internal jealousy, dissensions and the civil war that broke out at the end of the 19th century. Taking advantage of the dissensions and intrigues in the Ahom royal family and among the nobility, the Burmese led several invasions into the country between 1816 and 1824, paralysing the administration and establishing instead a reign of terror. As a result of their inhuman brutality, large sections of the people in the Assam Valley fled to the hills and thus there was a general de-population of the whole region. However, the local nobility was scarcely in a position to rescue the people of this region from the consequences of feudal decay—Assam gradually passed into British hands in 1826 (at the conclusion of the first Anglo-Burmese War)⁷.

Developments under British Rule

The period from 1826 is a formative epoch in the history of Assam. It marked not only the end of the independent and powerful Ahom monarchy but ushered in a new regime of foreign domination, the effects of which can be felt even today. The East India Company annexed lower Assam and tried to establish its hegemony in upper Assam⁸ through a puppet king, Purander Singh. That experiment, however, failed and the Company annexed the territory and placed it under the Bengal administration. Assam was administered as part of Bengal during the years 1826-1873. In 1874, it was made a Chief Commissioner's province and a major portion of the Bengali speaking areas of Cachar and Sylhet and also Goalpara came under the provincial administration of Assam. In 1905 a new re-organisation took place and that was to have a lasting influence on the attitude of the Assamese towards migrants from the neighbouring areas of East Bengal.⁹ At that time the British partitioned the sprawling densely populated province of Bengal into a predominantly Bengali Muslim province in the East which incorporated Assam, and a predominantly Bengali Hindu province in the West. There followed bitter reaction from the Bengali Hindus who resented the partition of their province and from the Assamese who resented the incorporation into a portion of Bengal. In 1912 the British annulled the partition and re-established Assam as a separate Chief Commissioner's province that included the predominantly Bengali Muslim district of Sylhet and the predominantly Bengali Hindu district of Cachar. These new boundaries were to remain intact until the partition of India and Assam in 1947. Pre-partitioned Assam thus consisted of the two valleys, the Garo Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Naga Hills and the Mizo Hills including Sylhet district.¹⁰

Emergence of the Problem

The establishment of the Company's authority in the different Government departments, and the re-constitution of Assam, bringing in

large Bengali speaking areas, may be said to have marked the beginning of the language problem in Assam.¹¹ British capital penetrated the economy and started building up an infrastructure in the interests of accumulation. The closed society was exposed to immigration labour, new skills, and new ideas. "This immigration has done much towards opening out and colonising the fertile and sparsely-peopled districts of Assam while relieving other provinces of a portion of their surplus population".¹² The establishment of the Assam Tea Company was part of the scheme of colonizing waste land in Assam to provide new avenues of investment for foreign capital.¹³ The tea industry required a regular supply of labour and so attracted a large number of labourers from Bihar, Chotanagpur, Uttar Pradesh and Madras. Thousands of labourers annually recruited for the plantations from outside provinces, most of whom did not return home, formed the biggest migrant group in Assam's population. The next important stream of migration was that of peasants from East Bengal districts, some 85 to 90 percent of whom were Muslims. Together with children they numbered about three lakhs in 1921 and five lakhs in 1931 according to official estimates. This rural immigration continued during the years 1901-1947,¹⁴ and was on such a scale that the indigenous component of the Assam valley population went down considerably in percentage terms by the middle of the 20th century. Though the process of assimilation of these migrant groups was extremely slow, they aspired to be on par with the Assamese in the valley. No doubt the immigrants contributed to Assam's economy by bringing large tracts of waste land under cultivation, but they affected Assam's social and cultural life adversely.

Dominance of the Bengali Language

Further, one plank of imperialist policy was to suppress local languages and to set up artificial provincial boundaries for the sake of a cheap and simplified administration. This policy affected the local middle classes and by promoting differences between them and the immigrants, served as an instrument that would help divide and rule. In April 1831, the Government of Bengal made Bengali, in place of Persian, the Court language of Assam on the ground that it was very difficult and too costly to replace Persian scribes who were on leave or who left the service. The services of the Bengalis immediately became indispensable in the anglo-vernacular and vernacular schools, since school teachers were not available in adequate numbers in any case to impart lessons in the Bengali language, which had since become the medium of instruction. The social dominance of Bengali-speaking people in Assam, Orissa, Chotanagpur and parts of Bihar was reflected in the dominance of their languages. As these areas, backward in the new education and professional training, came slowly to produce their own educated, they were eager for a share in the opportunities snatched by

the Bengalis. They attempted to redress the balance by stressing the claims of their own languages to be recognized as the languages of administration and law.¹⁶ Bengali patriotism and pride in language came to be challenged by the patriotism of the speakers of Assamese, Oriya and Bihari.¹⁶

The initial monopoly of office in almost all the departments by the new-comers from Bengal naturally generated ill-feeling and deep resentment amongst those, for whom hitherto there was no means of livelihood other than Government service. The polemic between the Bengali and Assamese languages since then had been fairly continuous and symbolizes in many ways the fight between the interests on the one hand of an immigrant and comparatively advanced middle class, and on the other hand an indigenous less advanced and suppressed middle-class. In the first decade of this century the Bengali middle class had already produced a big surplus of educated youth who could not hope to be employed in their narrow provincial set up. They sought their fortunes in the neighbouring states of Orissa, Bihar and Assam where their assertion of cultural superiority exacerbated local resentment at their success in finding jobs.¹⁷

Assam lagged behind the more advanced parts of India during the medieval times due to a low level of economic development, geographical considerations and the isolationist policy of the Ahom monarchy. The downfall of the feudal order did not bring the pace of development in Assam in line with that of the rest of British India. There was no native capitalist in Assam, the artisan was independent and he supplemented his income with the products of a farm he worked regularly. This explains the commercial monopoly of Marwari merchants who followed the British into Assam and diligently tapped the few opportunities for moneymaking opened by the British, like money-lending, supplying provisions to the tea-gardens, procuring mustard and later jute for the market outside Assam, and meeting the demand for new household implements and articles—cheap and mass produced—that the Assamese soon came to adopt. On the whole imperialism acted as a further brake on the development of the forces of production, communication, and education, and political consciousness suffered from a corresponding stagnation. The economic weakness and political immaturity of the middle class continued to prevent it from having a decisive confrontation with big capital which succeeded imperialism as the main exploiter, though the middle class had some gains since independence.

Post-Independence Situation

While the colonial state had unified India for the purpose of its domination and exploitation in a politico-administrative sense, it left the organisational unity of the Indian ruling-classes to the Indian state itself. The principal task of the Indian state in the wake of independence

was to organize a single national market and to bring about a political integration through which it could mediate between the various contradictory class interests.

The picture that emerged at the time of independence was by no means a simple one. The communal trouble that partition gave rise to, the integration of the princely states and the difficulties of organising the various nationalities into a single constitutional state structure were the most important of the many problems that confronted the Indian State.

The Indian National Congress had to take up these issues and resolve them after the transfer of power. The Congress party itself came to be divided on these questions, especially at the provincial level, where regional interests pulled them in different directions. On the question of the organisation of state structure, the constitution provided for a federal structure.

The colonial structure having left no single strong class, state power continues to be based on a coalition between the bourgeoisie and large land owners. More specifically the coalition has three elements: the monopoly bourgeoisie whose members control business empires spread across a number of spheres and a number of states; the small urban bourgeoisie consisting of business men confined to single industries or states and professional groups who are not direct exploiters but integrated into the system of exploitation like lawyers, managers and upper bureaucracy; and finally the class of landlords and rich peasants, who live mainly by exploitation either through rent or through wage labour or both. This last may appear too heterogeneous but post-independence land reforms have caused its constituents to coalesce into a more or less single category, so it is better treated as such. Bourgeois democracy and federal political structure create the environment for this coalition to work both at the centre and at the provincial level."¹⁸

The problem of Assam has to be seen in this context. Today, Assam consists of nine districts containing 30,408 square metres. Most of the population live in two valleys—the predominantly Assamese speaking Brahmaputra Valley with about 12.5 million people and the predominantly Bengali speaking Surma Valley with 1.7 million people. The economic changes that came about in the united Assam-Bengal province under colonialism had a disintegrating effect, in the sense of removing the objective basis for a community of Bengalis and Assamese living in an isolated single territory. This problem would not have been complicated but for the fact of the concentration of the Bengali speaking population in certain areas—Cachar and Goalpara. This provided, as it historically did in most parts in India, a specific area in which politics could be manipulated. After independence, the raising of the official language and medium of instruction issues brought linguistic chauvinism

to the forefront. It is a sophisticated device of the ruling class to completely formalize education in the name of modernity and progressivism in order to perpetuate elitism. The sophistication lies in the linking of these issues with the question of the cultural and linguistic identity of various nationalities in our country. "Chauvinism is one of the ideological tools which enables the bourgeoisie to maintain its domination over the proletariat".¹⁹

In Assam, we find that most issues, even when not remotely connected with language, tend to be seen in terms of Assamese-Bengali rivalry. Immigrations—refugees, infiltrants and evacuees in one form or the other still are a common feature; sometimes in an organised manner under the aegis of the ruling power, and often due to economic development. Assam still continues to have the highest immigration rates among the states of India.²⁰ The cumulative effect is to enhance the scope for communal, language and separationist politics.

Indeed, the language issue appears to have been utilized as a pawn in the game of power politics in Assam and it is unlikely that the conflict of local political interests will permit it to be judged on its own merits. A new political phenomenon of this period was the localized opportunism of the CPI which vociferously puts forward the proposal for political separation of Cachar. This was voiced also by the chauvinists in the Bengali organization of Cachar. Neither political experience nor a theoretical and programmatic formulation can be shown to justify CPI's change in policy. It has nothing in common with the democratic right to self determination. The right of nations to self determination implies exclusively "the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation." The oppression of Bengalis in Cachar is far from being real and the autonomy given to the Bengali language in the literary sphere is a clear indication of this fact. The question arises here, what should be the nature of inter-relations between different languages in Assam? The unhesitating answer is that, there should be a relation of equality and friendly co-operation and certainly not that of the predominance of one or few languages over others. Only on this basis, would it be possible for the people speaking languages that are now underdeveloped to carry forward their distinctive cultural heritage on the one hand and to absorb progressive ideas on the other.

The free and rapid development of capitalism would be impossible if not for such autonomy, which facilitates the concentration of capital, the development of the productive forces, the unity of the bourgeoisie and the unity of the proletariat on a country-wide scale. For bureaucratic interference in purely local (regional, national and other) questions is one of the greatest obstacles to economic and political development in general and an obstacle to centralism in important and fundamental matters in particular.²¹

SANDHYA BARUA

- ¹ Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution* Vol III London, 1965.
- ² M S Lazarev, (ed) *Oriental Countries To-day*, Calcutta, 1976
- ³ Bipan Chandra, *Modern India and Imperialism*, paper read at a seminar in Australia in September, 1972.
- ⁴ Bipan Chandra, 'The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1917' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol 5 No 3, 1975.
- ⁵ J Banaji, "Nationalism and Socialism", *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 7, 1974.
- ⁶ Cachar District includes a small area of the old district of Sylhet which was merged with East Pakistan in 1947 as a result of the partition of India.
- ⁷ A C Banerji, *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, Calcutta, 1964.
- ⁸ Lower Assam comprised of the districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong; upper Assam included the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur only.
- ⁹ Myron Weiner, "Assam and its Migrants", *Demography India* Vol II No I, June 1975.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ M Kar, "Assam's Language Question in Retrospect" *Social Scientist* Vol 4, September 1975.
- ¹² *Assam Administrative Report 1911-12*, p 54.
- ¹³ For details see A Guha, "Colonisation of Assam-Years of Transitional Crisis 1825-1840" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, No 2, June 1968.
- ¹⁴ A Guha, "Immigrants and Autochthones in a Plural Society: Their Inter-relations in the Brahmaputra Valley in Historical Perspectives" (paper presented at a Seminar held during 10-12 March 1975 at the Department of Sociology, Dibrugarh University).
- ¹⁵ Anil Seal, *Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, London, 1968 p 47.
- ¹⁶ For the beginning of the demand "Bihar for the Biharis", see V C P Chaudhury, *The Creation of Modern India*, Patna 1964.
- ¹⁷ E H Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society*, University of California Press, 1968. p 7.
- ¹⁸ Prabhat Patnaik, "Imperialism and the Growth of Indian Capitalism," *Explosion in a Sub-continent*, Robin Blackburn (ed) Penguin, 1975 p 52.
- ¹⁹ M Lowy, "Marxism and the National Question", *New Left Review* No 96, 1976.
- ²⁰ *Present variation of population in India and Assam*

	1901-11	1911-21	1921-31	1931-41	1941-51	1951-61	1961-71
Assam	16.8	20.2	20.1	20.5	20.1	35.0	34.7
India	5.7	0.3	11.0	14.2	13.3	21.6	26.6

SOURCES :- Myron Weiner "Assam and its Migrants" *Demography India* Vol III, June 1973.

- ²¹ V I Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Question, *Collected Works* Vol 20 p 45.

The New Textile Policy

THE cotton textile industry in India has been facing a crisis since the mid-sixties which became very severe around late 1974 leading to large scale "sickness" among textile mills. Per capita consumption of cloth in linear metres which had reached a peak in 1964 has stagnated since then and from the early 70's it is in fact declining. At the same time, costs of production especially of raw cotton have risen very sharply while the prices of cotton manufactures have risen much less which on the whole has resulted in a decline in the average level of profitability for the industry. While this has to be seen in the context of the developing recessionary crisis in the economy since the mid-sixties there has been a trend both in government and industry circles towards emphasising the need for a comprehensive textile policy which could resolve the crisis of demand and profitability in the industry.

The much awaited policy was announced on August 7, 1978 and as is often the case with long awaited official policies, hardly anything new can be gleaned from it. It emphasises that "the absence of clearcut and unambiguous policies relating to the various facets of this diverse industry and the failure to set definite time bound objectives" have been largely responsible for the unhappy situation in the textile industry. Once again therefore the objectives of providing cheaper cloth of good quality to the consumer; cheaper raw material to the industry and a rapid development of the decentralised sector are reiterated.

That the policy would contain such a narrative was well known. However, one aspect of the policy regarding which some uncertainty had still existed and which was a major issue on which an announcement was awaited was the controlled cloth obligation, the final decision on which has surpassed all expectations of the industry itself. The core of the policy relates to the scheme for controlled cloth production. The fact that the quantum of cloth to be produced by the private mill sector has been virtually reduced to zero shows very clearly that the government has finally yielded to the pressures from the stronger sections within the industry, which had existed right from the initiation of the controlled cloth scheme itself.

As part of its populist propaganda, the government first introduced this scheme in October 1964. It was supposed to ensure that a part of total cloth output would be of the type used by the 'weaker sections' in the economy, to be sold at controlled prices which they could afford. However, as was brought out very succinctly in the 61st Report of the Estimates Committee (1973-74) on Civil Supplies, the proportion of total output of cotton textiles of the controlled variety was progressively reduced and actual production was below even these levels. Initially the scheme envisaged 50 percent of cotton textiles production to be controlled and the obligation of individual mills was statutorily fixed. However, within a few years it was reduced to 40 percent. After another modification in 1968, the obligation declined further to 25 percent. Actual production was even lower: from about 200 million square metres in the quarter November 1968-January 1969, it fell to a mere 9 million square metres in the quarter February-April 1971. It may be noted that this obligation which was statutory to start with was made voluntary from July 1971. The industry agreed to produce voluntarily 100 million square metres of controlled cloth per quarter (that is 400 million square metres in a full year). However except in 1971-72, the actual production was far below this quantum. Once again in March 1974, the government reverted to statutory control, and the obligation was raised from 400 to 800 million square metres. There was also a hike in price of controlled cloth to the extent of 30 percent. Nonetheless the industry's actual production remained only around 80-90 million square metres against the statutory requirement of 200 million square metres per quarter. Another thing which came to light was that even within the quantity produced there were ingenious changes in the pattern of production—the proportion of saris, dhotis, shirting and drill produced was negligible while the output of longcloth increased sharply to protect the higher priced uncontrolled varieties of saris, shirting and so on.

That the industry was not anxious to produce controlled cloth and that the official machinery failed to cajole or coerce the industry into fulfilling its social obligation was increasingly becoming clear. Nor did the mills keep to the understanding that in the event of shortfalls in the production of controlled cloth they would reduce the prices of the non-controlled varieties. The argument put forward by the industry for its reluctance to produce controlled cloth has been that it has to incur losses in its production. Though this may be true in the case of some firms, given the tremendous differences in productivity across firms in the industry there are firms which would be making some profits in its production although not as much as would be made in the production of the non-controlled varieties. There is no 'social' justification in exempting these firms from this obligation. It was in recognition of this fact that the government introduced some exemptions in 1975-76. 'Sick' mills taken over by the NTC were exempted from this obligation. Also, to

encourage exports, exporting mills were allowed to set off a certain proportion of their controlled cloth obligation against exports. Hence although there was no scaling down of the obligation, these two exemptions in effect reduced the obligation from 800 million square metres to about 550 million square metres for that period. Then in March 1976 production of dhotis and saris was transferred to the handloom sector, which came to about 200 million square metres in a year, and since then there has been constant pressure from the industry to transfer the total obligation to the decentralised sector. Now under the new scheme the quantum of mill-made controlled cloth has again been reduced to the earlier 400 million square metres which would be produced by the NTC mills, and ultimately would be taken over by the decentralised sector especially the handlooms. After earmarking the NTC share, contracts for the production of the remaining quantity would be given to the privately owned mills on the basis of competitive bids subject to the price not exceeding the cost at which similar cloth would be manufactured by the NTC mills.

If we examine the government's own understanding of the failure of the controlled cloth scheme the new policy does not appear to be a very serious attempt on its part to ensure the clothing requirements of the poor consumers. According to the government although the production of controlled cloth was heavily subsidized it failed to provide cheap cloth to the consumer since the distribution system was unable to reach large sections of the population. Moreover in its view "the system of determining quotas for the production of controlled cloth on the basis of loom shifts has thrown a heavier burden on the weaker mills". The losses suffered by these mills in the production of such cloth has been the major cause of their sickness. Hence a number of mills it is argued, were exempted from the production of controlled cloth, resulting in a decline in its production.

However, there can be many objections to the above argument: Firstly the fact that controlled cloth obligation has been drastically reduced makes one suspect that the government implicitly lays greater stress on the absence of an effective distributive mechanism as being the major cause of the failure of the scheme rather than the insufficiency of production. This needs closer examination for it is not very easy to believe that 400 million square metres which is just about 10 percent of total cloth production of the mill sector, would suffice, to meet (even after taking into consideration the cheap cloth output of the decentralised sector) the clothing requirements of the poorer consumers, if properly distributed. Secondly, the decline in the controlled cloth production cannot be explained purely in terms of the exemption granted to the weaker mills, for, according to the Textile Commissioner himself a number of well-to-do textile firms have defaulted in the production of such cloth.

This makes one suspect the actual motivation of the government. Undoubtedly the trend towards exempting even the well-to-do mills from the controlled cloth obligation is related to the perceived need on the part of the government to support the sagging profitability of the mill sector. This becomes all the more clear when we note that in the immediate future the burden of the obligation is to largely fall on the NTC mills. The NTC had been formed specifically for the purpose of taking over 'sick' mills, and it appears that the government (and industry) itself was of the view that "sickness" was at least partly due to the controlled cloth obligation. Hence why is the burden now being shifted onto those very mills?

The new policy is in fact a complete reversal of the position in 1975-76 when the government recognised the differential performance and ability of firms in the industry and had attempted to lay the burden of controlled cloth production on firms not incurring losses. Handing over the obligation to the NTC mills or decentralized sector is merely a way of concealing the fact of subsidizing production at the expense of the exchequer in order to relieve the mill sector of this "social" burden. And though the policy states that the burden of the subsidy would be borne in an equitable manner by the entire textile industry it is conveniently silent on the exact manner in which this would be done. Such policies only bring out the fact that the government erodes into its own resources to prop up the profits in the private sector. However by doing so it restricts its own investment activity which ultimately affects the growth of the private sector itself.

· MRIDUL EAPEN

BOOK REVIEWS

Review Article

On Studying Rural Inequality

GORAN DJURFELDT AND STAFFAN LINDBERG, *BEHIND POVERTY; THE SOCIAL FORMATION IN A TAMIL VILLAGE*, Curson Press, Lund, Sweden, 1975, pp 340.

This book is a useful contribution to the literature on Tamil Nadu villages and more generally to the study of the forces underlying socio-economic inequality in India today. Though based on a detailed study of one village, the data are used to present a comprehensive empirical and theoretical analysis of productive relations.

On the fringes of the sprawling city of Madras and close to the Kovalam salt factory (which provides employment to many of its inhabitants for at least a part of the year), the village is unusual in that 898 (close to 90 percent) of its inhabitants are Harijans, and about 4 percent high castes like Vellala or Brahmin. It differs from many other villages of the district in that many of the Harijans own their land. It is interesting to note that most of the land lost by the Vellalas went to other high caste groups including migrant Reddiars from the adjacent state of Andhra Pradesh.

The authors present extremely useful information on income, living standards, and so on, for the village as a whole and for various sub-groups before going into their analysis of agriculture. They point quite correctly to the tremendous potential productive forces that can be harnessed, if there was some sort of a change in productive relations; specifically to the improvement of irrigation facilities and pasturage or breeding of animals. Few farmers harvested more than 20 bags of rice per acre. This figure is surprisingly low in view of the sizable increase in output since the fifties. This could possibly be due to the under-reporting of yields which ensured that less rice was available for procurement, and would justify farmers' complaints regarding government policy. If more can be hidden for the black market so much the better. And 1969-70 was a good year for the blackmarketeer. While it is true that the

productive forces in the region are under developed and that yields can be substantially increased, the figures quoted understate the existing level of productivity.

The authors point to the changes in productive relations that have occurred since the pre-colonial period, though it appears that there is far too much idealization of the pre-colonial situation in the region. For example, available documentary evidence does not suggest that the *jajmani* system was so much the centre of socio-economic relations as they make it out to be. There was even then considerable buying and selling (both for cash and for paddy) in pre-British towns and weekly markets. Even new agricultural tools could often be bought in local markets, though the village artisans were responsible for their maintenance, especially during the peak period when the cultivators had to work daily in their fields.

The information provided on land ownership is quite interesting, but it is unfortunate that the lowest land-owning category has not been broken down further. Specifically, it would have been useful not to lump together those owning less than ten cents of land with those owning close to $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres. It is striking that there is a low incidence of landlessness in this village. Yet the distribution of land holdings in the higher categories is quite consistent with most other reports available for Tamil Nadu, with a considerable concentration of land in the hands of a very small number of households.

Fitting Data to Theory?

Too much time is spent on arguing theoretical points instead of putting down the data straight. Though one can agree with much of their theoretical argument, there are some problems. For one thing, there is much cross-cultural data that should have been considered, before arriving at generalisations. Thus, they state: "sharecropping for example, is a form usually associated with feudalism", and then they ask whether it can be termed a feudal relation when a middle farmer takes land as a share cropper from a small landowner. But the issue is more complex. Sharecropping is a common pattern found in many parts of the American south. Is it feudal? It clearly emerged as one way of dealing with developing capitalism in the nineteenth century, and is closely related there to certain crops like tobacco. Likewise, in Tamil Nadu, a landowner who prefers to spend his time on other things can manage to give his land to a sharecropper if he is cultivating paddy, but not if he is cultivating sugarcane. Sharecropping is often an effective way of exploiting labour and diversifying productive assets in the case of paddy. However in the case of sugar, only one or two men are needed to look after the land most of the year, and only during the harvest season need they be supervised carefully. Indeed, many have solved the problem even more simply, by selling the standing sugarcane crop to a

sugar factory. This is not possible at present in the case of paddy. It would perhaps have been better if the authors had discussed their theoretical points elsewhere, taking them up with the kind of detail they deserve.

I find myself disagreeing with the authors on a number of matters of detail, which perhaps one should not go into here. Still, some of them seem to demand comment. Thus, they state: "The *jati* and *jajmani* systems, however, which functioned as economic structures in the pre-colonial mode of production, have lost most of these functions, and only a few vestiges remain." Somehow, this appears to be an attempt to manipulate data to fit theory. There is no doubt that previously the majority of labourers worked as agrestic or field slaves under higher-caste landowners. (This has been discussed elsewhere by a number of writers including Dharma Kumar, Hjele and Mencher). Further, it is also clear that these labourers stopped being attached to particular landowners or pieces of land during the nineteenth century and came to be 'free' wage labourers. To their ranks joined those who lost their rights to land partly as a result of financial ruin and partly as a result of the decrease in tenancy in the years immediately following independence. In this process, the position of the permanent *padiyal* underwent a number of changes. Nonetheless the position of a permanent *padiyal* today is quite complex and is not a simple carryover of feudal relations. In my own research, in a sample of eight villages, the vast majority of permanent *padiyals* (80 percent) had worked for their present employers for six years or less. In some cases the reason why they became *padiyals* was to save money for a marriage, in other because they were in debt. However, it was far more common to work as unattached day labourers. Kathleen Gough reports for Thanjavur in 1976 that the status of permanent day labourer has now become a scarce and much desired position, since it means steady employment. This appears also to be true in the Kuttanad area of Kerala.

Rural Structures, Past and Present

One can also question the authors' picture of the "traditional" or medieval village structure, as very clearly they have presented an idealized picture of what is called the *jati* system and the nature of *jajmani* relations. There is no reason to believe that the "*jajmani* system" ever was an expression of "the productive relations in the village economy". Rural India did not remain exactly the same over the period from the early centuries of the Christian era until the sixteenth or seventeenth century. There was considerable change over time. We are only now finding out about the extent of rebellion by lower caste groups against the inequities of the system (see for example, Rajkumar, "Struggles for Rights during Chola Period", in *Social Scientist*, 18-19). Furthermore, it is clear that villages were never self-sufficient, even in these earlier

periods. The *jajmani* system as described by the anthropologist in many ways represents an idealization, and an attempt to make India seem extremely exotic. This is not to deny that there were *jajmani* relations in medieval villages, but rather that they only represented a small proportion of the basic economic transactions within any given village though their ritual importance in affirming rank distinctions must have been quite important. To begin with, a considerable proportion of the grain produced in the village traditionally was used to support local officials, and local and more distant rulers, as well as temples and the military. Excess grain also was stored by members of the wealthy landowning classes to tide themselves over times of scarcity. Further, it does not appear that money as a means of distribution was so scarce in medieval Tamil Nadu. Under the Cholas, Tamil Nadu was certainly involved in commodity production and extensive trade, both internally and externally. The great medieval merchant guilds of south India were engaged in both kinds of trade. In any case, this is a major issue and cannot be fully analyzed within the confines of a book review. The reason why I mention it is that it affects the analysis of change presented by the authors.

In any case, however, the main focus of the book is on the present situation and not on the past. The data is quite interesting and valuable though at times the intermixture of data and theorizing is somewhat disconcerting. For example, in chapter five the authors state that the Thaiyur type of agriculture is unique in that even small farmers regularly require hired labour. But taking India as a whole, this is a general feature of rice production as opposed to other grains, and not at all unique. It is at least in part dictated by the requirements of wet rice production. Though productive relations were somewhat different in the south-east Asian rice-producing countries, they too always made use of the labour of many people at a number of stages in rice production.

Surplus and Investment

The statement that small farmers in Thaiyur panchayat do not sell any grain, does not tally with evidence collected from other parts of the district. Obviously, if the farmers could manage, they would try to save what they could in order to feed their family for the year. But I found many small farmers trying extremely hard to be able to have some marketable surplus, which they could use in order to purchase other things. Perhaps the existence of the salt fields in Thaiyur panchayat, and the consequent availability of alternative employment, is what makes the difference. In most parts of the state, small farmers do not have that option. On the other hand they are not always successful in competing for wage labour with the landless, since they usually give their own fields first preference. What is being objected to here is the usual business of saying "the Indian farmer chooses the most common

option, to work as a wage labourer." Most farmers in most areas do not often have that option. Thus, they must try to cover their expenses by growing more than they can eat, if humanly possible.

There are serious criticisms of chapter seven, some of which relate to the data itself, others to the implications of this material for the analysis of Indian rural structures. It is possible that in Thaiyur panchayat the rice farmers are not investing their capital in the land, but that is not the pattern for the district as a whole. Not only does my own data indicate a high level of investment in land, but district wide materials from the District Agricultural Department support the same conclusion. A second important point is that big landowners were there before the introduction of capitalist relations in agriculture. However, their ways of functioning and their involvement in agriculture have changed drastically over the past 200-odd years. In any case, there are many dangers in characterizing the basic structure of productive relations on the basis of one village. There is no reason to believe that the importance of capitalist production relations has decreased since the nineteenth century. In fact, from my experience in the area, I would say that it has *increased* significantly in importance since independence, and especially in the 1960s and 70s. Today, sharecropping plays a smaller and smaller role in rice production. On the other hand, what the middle and larger farmers plant, how they plant it, and so on, is very much determined by market relations. Where the land owners grow less, it is because of decisions by larger farmers that they can make more money by growing lower-yielding varieties of paddy, or cash crops, or by creating shortages. At the present time these farmers are arguing for price supports, threatening that they will not grow more if they do not get them. If this is not capitalism, what is it?

Development Programmes and Caste Emancipation

Chapter eight is well-written and well-presented. The material from the Harijans about caste prejudice certainly does ring true. It is clear that there has been change in intercaste relations. But one doubts if caste endogamy is as firmly accepted by Harijans as they would have us believe. In several of the villages we found cases of affairs going on between caste Hindu (Naicker-Gounder) females and Harijan males as well as the opposite. Of those belonging to the same social class (that is among the poor), many a flirtation occurred between boys and girls of Harijan and Naicker groups. But marriage is arranged by the elders, and thus intergroup marriage is viewed as impossible.

The material on development programmes is extremely interesting. While their contention that most Harijans believe that "development" brings emancipation for their caste can be seriously questioned, there is no doubt that the general effect of all development on the popular mind is to create an attitude of dependence on extension.

Indeed, this has been one of the most destructive parts of the entire development approach.

On the whole, this book is quite interesting and well worth reading. It is clear that there are specific points on which one can disagree with the authors. Nonetheless, it is important to point out the relationship between the poverty of the vast majority of the people and the basic socio-economic structure, as well as the fact that only through the fundamental transformation of the structure can the poor hope to escape their present destiny.

JOAN MENCHER

TERRY EAGLETON, MARXISM AND LITERARY CRITICISM,
Methuen and Co., London, 1976, £ 1.00.

TERRY EAGLETON, MYTHS OF POWER : A MARXIST STUDY OF
THE BRONTËS, Macmillan, London, 1975, £ 6.95

Western academic attitudes to Marxist literary criticism have been changing from contemptuous dismissal or deliberate distortions to cautious assimilation and honest qualifications. After decades of 'exposing' or 'burying' Marxism we find more and more intellectuals giving it a sympathetic attention in the hope of finding radical solutions to the intractable economic and cultural problems confronting the affluent societies. Dr Eagleton teaches Marxist criticism at Oxford University. One does not normally expect an Oxford don to produce literary criticism infused with Marxist principles. Now that Oxford has accommodated Marxist criticism in its academic curriculum, departments of English in Indian Universities may pluck up enough courage to acquaint their students with this significant trend in contemporary criticism.

Dr Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* is a short introductory work aiming at outlining some of the basic issues of Marxist literary theory. He makes a distinction between Marxist criticism and sociological criticism and characterises the work of L. Schuecking, R. Escarpit, R. D. Altick, Raymond Williams, A. Swingewood and M. Bradbury as a suitably "tamed, degutted version" of Marxism appropriate for Western consumption. He points out that the originality of Marxist criticism lies "not in its historical approach to literature, but in its revolutionary understanding of history itself" (p 3). Eagleton steers clear of the vulgar sociological approach to problems of the relation between ideology and material infrastructure. His pointed illustrative analysis of certain aspects of Conrad and Eliot shows that Marxism can explain the effectiveness of their artistic representation of contemporary reality without vulgar sociological simplifications often resorted to in the past by some Marxist theorists.

Eagleton's attitude towards the theory and practice of socialism is neither objective nor informed. He wrongly finds the antecedent of socialist realism, "cobbled together by Stalin and Gorky and promulgated

by Stalin's cultural thug Zhdanov" (pp 37-38) in the perversions and aberrations of futurism and Proletkult ideas. Socialist realism as a trend and method of literary creation committed to truthful reflection of the revolutionary dynamics of a society in transition to communism demands and deserves, for a just analysis, a sober and mature approach which is lacking in this book.

Problems of form and content, writers' commitment and technical aspects of literary production have been discussed in the course of presenting the ideas of Lukacs, Brecht and Walter Benjamin. Eagleton could have considerably enriched the content of his book if he had cared to review the recent work done on aesthetics and literary theory in socialist countries.

Eagleton rightly sees in criticism a weapon to liberate ourselves from exploitation and oppression. But the claim he makes on behalf of Marxist criticism may sound, in view of its current minority status in the Anglo-American academic and literary establishments, too ambitious. In his *Myths of Power* he says: "Marxist criticism must refuse to occupy its modest niche within the formidable array of critical methods—mythological, psychoanalytical, theological, stylistic—which reflects the tolerant philistinism of a liberal democracy" (p 2).

When we read the traditional, liberal, academic writings on the Brontës we would not know that the sisters lived through an era in English history which witnessed such crucial events like machine-breaking, Reform agitation, Corn Laws and Chartism. In these books we are not shown how history directly or indirectly disrupted the personal lives of these sensitive individuals. Eagleton explores the ideological roots of the Brontë novels in the specific social conditions of the 19th century England. He is alive to the danger of crude sociological reductionism which tries to establish a one-to-one relation between socio-historical facts and works of art. To circumvent the danger of simplified sociology Eagleton employs in his study some categories first enunciated in the writings of European Marxists like Lukacs, Goldmann and Althusser. From Goldmann he borrows the concept of "categorical structure" comprising shared categories in forming heterogeneous works and shaping the consciousness of classes or groups producing them. From Althusser he takes over the concept of "overdetermination", originally employed by Freud in a different context. Althusser uses the concept to describe the way in which contradictions in society condense into complex unity and in which subsidiary conflicts individually and cumulatively determine the major contradiction. Lukacs equips himself with the idea of "possible consciousness" referring to the limitations of the consciousness of an historical period which can be abolished only by a transformation of real relation. Whatever may be the power of the individual imagination there are limits of what can be historically said in a specific historical context.

Eagleton identifies in the Brontës' fiction a recurrent ideologically oriented categorial structure of roles, values and relations which function as the primary mediation between their novels and the social reality reflected in them. He demonstrates convincingly that the historical conditions of the West Riding in the early nineteenth century gave birth to two sets of mutually contending values. "On the one hand are ranged the values of rationality, coolness, shrewd self-seeking, energetic individualism, radical protest and rebellion; on the other lie habits of piety, submission, culture, tradition, conservatism" (p 4). He reads Charlotte's novels in terms of the fictional tensions which are imaginative transformations of frictions between the industrial bourgeoisie and the landed gentry or aristocracy.

Eagleton does not mechanically simplify the class character of the Brontë sisters. Nor does he reduce the structural tensions of their novels to the level of a mere antagonism between different sections of the ruling class. A detailed analysis of the functions of the leading characters in Charlotte's novels leads him to the conclusion that in each work we discover "an inherently complex system where roles are fluid and permutable, where characters may embody degrees of fusion and overlapping between two or more functions. And this liability of the structure which allows roles to be combined, displaced and inverted within a controlling order of literary types, is a major clue to the novels' meaning" (p 74).

Most comments on *Wuthering Heights* tend to isolate it from its social context and analyze it in terms of eternal categories devoid of socio-historical content. Eagleton brings to light the social implications of the basic contradiction in the novel expressed in the choice between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. The tragedy, according to him, arises from Catherine's attempt to square authenticity with social convention, "an ontological commitment to Heathcliff with a phenomenal relationship to Linton" (p 101).

Eagleton's doctrinal intolerance of a pluralist approach to criticism is particularly interesting in view of the general West European tendency to argue in favour of a pluralist society with a multiplicity of political parties and, by implication, competing but co-existing ideologies. These are times when even many leading lights of the European communist parties readily abandon some long-cherished principles of Marxism-Leninism. In this context the Oxford scholar's refusal to treat Marxist criticism as merely one of the possible approaches to literature and his insistence that it should be approached as the many-sided contribution to the great Hegelian totality of truth are likely to evoke only a faint response till a considerable corpus of Marxist practical criticism emerges that can substantiate its theoretical claims.

MOHAN THAMPI

Social Scientist

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A - Article

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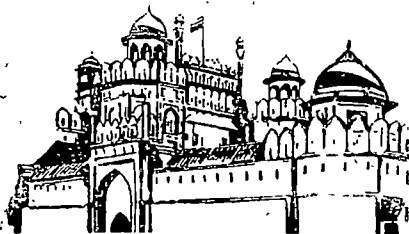
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CONTRIBUTORS

N K CHANDRA is Professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

AMALENDU GUHA is Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

ZOYA KHALIQ is at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

SUSAN RAM is a Research Scholar in History at Madras.

B T RANADIVE is the President of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions and a Member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India(Marxist).

B T RANADIVE

Carrillo's "Eurocommunism and the State"

THE AUTHOR of the book *Eurocommunism and the State*, is the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Spain which has played a glorious revolutionary role in the fight against Spanish fascism. The years of Civil War in the 1930s saw the emergence of Dolores Ibarruri—La Passionaria—at the head of the Spanish CP. This miner's daughter rapidly rose to leadership and along with the General Secretary, Jose Dias, was soon elected to the ECCI which guided the world Communist movement. In those days, the name of La Passionaria was known to all Communists and progressives. She is now the President of the Communist Party of Spain.

The sufferings and sacrifices of our Spanish comrades, their indomitable courage in the struggle against Franco's fascism and the colossal price they paid for the liberation of the Spanish working class and people, fully reflected the revolutionary spirit and idealism of the working class guided by Marxist-Leninist thought. Santiago Carrillo's book, however, is a strange anti-climax to the heroic traditions of the Spanish working class and the revolutionary ideology that inspired it to take the leading role in the struggle against fascism. For in this book, Carrillo repudiates the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and makes his Communism acceptable to Spanish and European liberals, in the

pernicious tradition of Bernstein. Bernstein, in his book, quotes the Spanish Socialist, Parlo Iglesias, as follows: "The bourgeoisie, of whatever shade of opinion it may be, must be convinced of this, that we do not wish to take possession of the Government by the same means that were once employed, by violence and bloodshed, but by lawful means which are suited to civilisation."¹ This is exactly the purpose and gist of Carrillo's book. He proclaims himself a Communist, but is embarrassed by the principles of Communism, its revolutionary practice, its hatred of the bourgeois system, and wants to don the clothes of liberalism to be in respectable company.

Roots of Eurocommunism: Bourgeois Nationalism

The chapter on the 'Historical Roots of Eurocommunism' is an attempt to dissociate the Communist Party of Spain from its past international connections and present the Party as a national Party, not drawing any inspiration from the international working class movement. To whom does this argument appeal? To the Spanish bourgeoisie who are now asked to trust the Spanish Communists and their honourable intentions.

In fact, Carrillo at one place almost says that the Spanish Communists were more opposed to Soviet help than their allies during the years of the Civil War: "What is also ignored is the fact that the Communist Party was ready, at one moment, even to give up the ministerial portfolios it did have and to support the Government from outside in order to facilitate the Government's relations with the Western Powers, with the aim of bringing to an end its almost exclusive dependence on Soviet supplies, and that if this decision, which had already been taken, was not carried out, this was because some of our allies thought it might have disastrous effects on the morale of the Republic's fighting men."² Obviously, the Republic's fighting men understood better who their real friends were, nor had the allies lost their commonsense.

An attitude of ingratitude towards the Communist International and fraternal Parties in respect of their past assistance, an over-eagerness to dissociate the Spanish Party from the socialist countries and a recourse to bourgeois nationalism in the name of the independence of the Spanish CP from any world Communist centre stand out as one of the sources of Eurocommunism. It is therefore not surprising that there is no warm recognition of the immense help rendered by the CPSU and the Soviet Union during the years of Civil War, of the great efforts of the Communist International to rouse the working class in all countries in defence of the Spanish Republic, nor of the millions of lives sacrificed by the Soviet in the struggle against Hitler which made present-day Europe possible. Can anyone who wants to write about the Spanish Party in the struggle against Franco fascism do so without mentioning the help

rendered by the CI, the fraternal parties and the Soviet Union? And should this be a source of embarrassment or a matter of pride?

The Bolsheviks and Spain

In his book, Carrillo quotes a letter signed by Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov to Caballero, the Spanish Prime Minister heading the Popular Front. That letter, dated December 21, 1936, not only offers to put at the disposal of the Republican Government military advisers, but gives very sound revolutionary advice. Carrillo throughout his book argues as if the other CPs and the CI never bothered to consider that the conditions in different countries were different and required different approaches and tasks. Stalin's letter to Caballero exposes the charge: "The Spanish Revolution is opening up roads which are different in many respects from the road travelled by Russia. This is determined by the difference in conditions in the social, historical and geographical spheres, the demands of the international situation, which are not the same as those which confronted the Russian Revolution. It is very possible that the parliamentary road may turn out to be a more effective procedure for revolutionary development in Spain than it was in Russia."³

Stalin gives further friendly advice: Promulgate decrees of an agrarian and fiscal nature which would satisfy the peasants; arm the peasants. "It would also be a good thing to attract the peasants to the Army and to form in the rear of the fascist armies groups of guerillas made of peasants."⁴ He then asks the Government to win over the petty and middle bourgeoisie and bring the representatives of the Republican parties closer to the Government. Undoubtedly, very sound and concrete advice—to combine the anti-feudal agrarian and democratic revolution with the anti-fascist struggle. A Parliament elected on the basis of a victorious revolutionary programme, based on the armed might of the peasantry, would be "a more effective procedure for revolutionary developments in Spain than it was in Russia."

Carrillo's Interpretation

But what has Carrillo to say about this advice? He considers that possibly it was just a tactical move by the Soviet Party. He comments: "Although there are some people who have seen these ideas as a tactical move by the Soviet Party designed for a particular set of circumstances—and in the light of things which happened subsequently or which we came to know about later, it is possible that they are not without justification—the fact is that many of us took altogether seriously the possibility of that road, which was corroborated more or less conclusively by the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and which corresponds to our idea of the advance to socialism with democracy."⁵

Once again the hint is that the Soviet Party was not sincere. Indeed, tactics for Carrillo has this meaning. But he says the Spanish Communists pursued the path sincerely. Here, apart from his eagerness to dissociate himself from the Soviets, Carrillo also reveals his failure to understand the revolutionary significance of Stalin's proposals. He reduces the entire advice to the pursuit of a parliamentary path, that is, seeking social transformation from capitalism to socialism through parliamentary struggles and elections.

Stalin was talking about the parliamentary road in the context of the armed struggle of the Republic against the fascists and the completion of the agrarian and democratic revolutions, whereas Carrillo and the 20th Congress talked about the parliamentary path and nothing more. Stalin's advice was based on Lenin's famed *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*, which he related to the immediate situation in Spain. Why should Carrillo have a grouse about it? In his book he repeatedly demands that Marxism should be applied taking into consideration the concrete situation. Why then is he displeased with the leaders of the CPSU? The reason is that *for Carrillo the parliamentary path is a fixed principle* and his grouse is that neither Stalin nor the Soviet Party approved of it. However, Carrillo himself did not stick to the parliamentary path in the fight against Franco, and elections and parliamentary struggles did not bring about the downfall of the fascist regime in Spain.

'Redundancy' of Revolution in Developed Countries

The central point of Carrillo's book is that there is absolutely no need for a revolution in the developed capitalist countries. He, of course, never mentions the USA which surely is as developed as Spain or West Germany. According to him socialism can be achieved peacefully, without violating any of the rules of bourgeois democracy or burdening the conscience of the modern knights of this democracy—the Eurocommunists.

In Carrillo's words, "...there can be no thought of transforming the society without achieving State power, without the working people (not the working class) rising to the position of the leading force in society, to the detriment of monopoly capital, and in the service of all who live by their own labour. The question is to decide whether this is possible without breaking the rules of democracy, while changing the content of traditional democratic institutions, complementing them with new forms which expand and establish political democracy still more firmly. We Spanish Communists and other parties in the developed capitalist countries declare that *this is possible*. The argument that *there is still not a single example* of the hegemony of the working people under these forms is without any scientific value. It corresponds to the dogmatic, conservative conception that *things will always be the same*—an

idea to which history has so often given the lie (all emphases in original)."⁶ It is Santiago Carrillo's dictat (pontifically propounded) that you will achieve socialism peacefully in all developed countries (including the USA perhaps), and anyone who questions this is dogmatic.

Having done away with revolution and the necessity of a revolutionary struggle, having assured the bourgeoisie that he is a non-violent Communist, Carrillo builds castles in the air and erects a utopia in the name of democratic socialism which turns out to be a breeding ground for private capital and the multinationals.

'DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM'

His democratic road to socialism is nothing but the prolongation of capitalism and exploitation in the name of the mixed economy and anti-monopoly society. Hence, "it is certainly the case that the democratic road to socialism presupposes a process of economic transformations different from what we might regard as the *classical* model. That is to say that it presupposes the *long-term co-existence of public and private forms of property* (emphasis in original). It is in this way that the stage of political and economic democracy foreseen in our programme acquires its full significance; in this stage, which is not yet socialism, but which is also no longer the domination of the State by monopoly capital, it is a question of preserving to the greatest possible extent the productive forces and social services already created, recognising the role which *private enterprise* has in this phase (emphasis added)."⁷

Can anything be clearer? In a fully developed capitalist country, after the peaceful transfer of power to the bloc of *labour and culture*, there will be prolonged coexistence of public and private capitalist enterprises. Is there a need for such coexistence in the transitional period in a developed country? Anyone least acquainted with Marxism-Leninism will reply in the negative. For Carrillo, the necessity arises because he thinks it is undemocratic to socialise the means of production through legal compulsion or expropriation. Democracy at last has found its true meaning—socialise the means of production with the consent of the owners; through peaceful take-over of the State the domination of monopoly on the State is to be ended, but not private ownership of the means of production!

In Carrillo's own words: "At the same time, the main aim is to socialise...the decisive levers of the economy to ensure the hegemony of the historic bloc made up of the forces of labour and culture in the transition period."⁸ An aim subject to the acceptance of the prolonged coexistence of public and private enterprise.

Bases for Class Collaboration

Democratic planning, according to Carrillo, "will integrate the public and private sectors and make it possible to work out an economic

model adapted to the real needs of the population and to radical improvement in the quality of living.”⁹ Coexistence once again, not even a hint that private enterprise will be gradually squeezed out. It will be integrated, that is, educated to behave itself according to strict democratic norms. The entire idea of guaranteed exploitation and assurance of class collaboration is put in the following way: “The coexistence of forms of public and private ownership means acceptance of unearned increment and the private appropriation of part of this, that is the existence of a mixed system. Society has the means to ensure that this unearned income is not exorbitant, by means of taxation, and that it is nevertheless sufficient to *encourage* private enterprise (emphasis added).”¹⁰

This is a strange transitional stage indeed in a developed country, where capitalist enterprise is not to be growingly restricted but to be actually encouraged. The private enterprise referred to here is not the small producer’s enterprise, but a capitalist concern earning profits. In fact, what is suggested here is some kind of non-monopoly capitalism—the illusion of many liberals. The ‘democratic model of socialism’ guarantees the basic fundamental right to exploit and earn profits. It follows, therefore, that the owners must have full ‘democratic’ rights to protect their right to exploitation. “This system, which will still be economically mixed, will translate itself into a political regime in which the owners will be able to organise themselves not only economically but also in a political party or parties representative of their interests” (that is, class interests); “this will be one of the component parts of political and ideological pluralism.”¹¹

However, Carrillo, out of sheer habit, does not forget class struggle. “All this also means that the class struggle is going to manifest itself openly, although the social consensus will logically be greater than that which exists in present day society in which hegemony is exercised by monopoly capital.”¹² But do not be afraid of the open manifestation of class struggle. It will be a moderate, tame, non-violent affair with the bourgeoisie themselves accepting socialism, although in a caricatured form. “The overcoming of social differences (the class struggle is replaced by just ‘differences’) will follow a natural process (not a socio-historical course) and will not be the result of coercive measures (nature abhors coercion, even legal compulsion will not be there) but of the development of the productive forces and of the social services, so that through a gradual process, encouraged by education (change of heart theory of Mahatma Gandhi), all sections of population (including capitalists) will be integrating themselves in the social collective.”¹³

This is really creative Marxism! Even Marx did not know that the development of the productive forces will integrate the exploiters with the exploited as a natural process, that there need be no class war

and that there would be class struggle without coercion and with increased social consciousness.

Here is a guarantee that the power of the democratic State will not be used against the exploiting elements, while the State will guarantee their right to exploit. And this is called the democratic road to socialism. This is what Carrillo promises to the liberals. The only fig leaf is that the domination of monopolies over the State has somehow been done away with — without a serious political class battle—by ‘democratic and peaceful means’. The non-monopolist or anti-monopolist bloc is supposed to hold power but is also supposed to guarantee that no coercive measures will be taken against any section of the capitalists. Pure democracy indeed!

BEFRIENDING IMPERIALISM AND THE MULTINATIONALS

Friendship with imperialism, or at least a position of equidistance between imperialist and socialist countries, between imperialism and the successful proletarian socialist revolution, follows from this outlook. Both imperialist and socialist countries are described as power blocs.

Listen to Carrillo: “Like the rest of Western Europe in our world of power blocs, Spain is situated in a well defined political, economic and military zone. We do not intend to ignore this reality.”¹⁴ That is, “we” will remain with the political, economic and military world of the imperialists. “Our position is not to break with reality so as to go over to the other zone, to the one which, in one form or another, is grouped round the USSR. We have already indicated that our aim is a Europe independent of the USSR and the United States, a Europe of the peoples, orientated towards socialism, in which our country will preserve its own individuality.”¹⁵ Can any Communist put the enemy of mankind, the gendarme of world reaction, American imperialism, on the same footing as Soviet Russia? But this is where the appeal to liberals, the concept of two power blocs, leads to. There is to be no distinction between socialism and imperialism—an outlook which subverts the interests of imperialism. In this attempt to curry favour with the liberals, the fact that Soviet Russia is part of Europe is also to be forgotten. A barrier is to be erected between socialism and the rest of Europe, while friendship is to be cultivated with US imperialism.

And what about the economic environment? The same story is to be repeated. “The economic environment is more complicated. It is to be expected that imperialism will try to destabilise a democratic power whose leadership is in the hands of the forces of labour and culture.”¹⁶ Therefore, “it would be necessary to strengthen economic relations with the socialist countries of Europe and Asia.”¹⁷ Having satisfied his conscience with this one sentence referring to socialist countries, Carrillo hastens to add that he does not mean that he wants to go out of the imperialist-capitalist orbit. “All this does not signify a transformation

of our country's system of economic relations...Spain should strive to keep her historical markets (we know what they are), both those where she sells and those where she buys, although trying to broaden and diversify them as far as possible in accordance with her interests."¹⁸ What does this mean? It means that a Spain independent of the USSR and the USA shall not be independent of imperialist multinationals. Multinationals must be invited and allowed to extract profits. "This will mean that investments of foreign capital and the functioning of the multinationals in our country will not be *hindered* (emphasis ours), and consequently that foreign capital in Spain would extract profits."¹⁹ Eurocommunism, to improve upon the weaknesses of democracy in socialist countries, promises full democracy to multinationals. Carrillo, who started his peaceful march to socialism with the dethroning of monopoly from power, now invites international monopolists, the world's worst exploiters, to aid him in building Spanish socialism.²⁰

Then Carrillo makes the following fatuous remark. "From the standpoint of the principles and the historical experience of socialism, this would be no more than a repetition of what has been and is being done in countries where socialism has been established for many years."²¹ It is ironical that Carrillo has to rely on earlier socialist models for support when he wants to present Spanish socialism as a purely national movement. The recent deals of the Soviets with the multinationals have raised criticism and doubts in many quarters. They have been characterised as compromising deals full of revisionist opportunism. Apart from this, does Carrillo seriously think that a country like the USSR whose economic socialist might outweighs even that of the USA in many sectors is on par with Carrillo's democratic Spain in dealing with the multinationals? It is obvious that logical and truthful reasoning is not a part of Eurocommunism and its ideological contentions.

"If things are as they are, it is obvious (oh, very, very obvious) that a socialist democracy in Spain would have to maintain a policy of remaining open to foreign investments and to the multinationals *which suit our economic development*. In this case what would have to be preserved would be the national interest, the integration of foreign investment into the national plan, and the prohibition of any interference, direct or indirect in internal affairs, against which the most severe economic sanctions would be justified (emphasis in original)."²² We are familiar with these phrases in our country. From Jawaharlal Nehru to Morarji Desai, they have been talking about foreign investments only in the national interest, controlling of multinationals and so on. But we have seen that the foreign investors are getting more and more entrenched, victimising Indian workers and looting the people. The fact is that our economy, which has to rely on multinationals for its development, cannot control them. This simple truth Carrillo has yet to learn. Under these circumstances, there is every chance of Spanish national interests and socialism

being integrated with the multinationals, rather than the multinationals getting integrated with Spanish national interests.

Carrillo's 'Multipolar Balance'

Naturally, the foreign policy adopted must be a 'flexible' one, which strengthens the imperialist camp. All progressive forces would desire a change in the present balance of military forces, against imperialism and in favour of the anti-imperialists. But not Carrillo, who does not want to impair the strength of the imperialist camp: "As regards the problems which arise from Spain being in an area of obvious military importance, the policy in this sphere must be flexible. It is not a question of *upsetting the present* world balance of forces (emphasis ours) or of switching from American to Soviet influence."²³

Further: "So long as an awareness of the necessity for disarmament does not impose itself, the military balance of forces may, for quite a time, be the only guarantee of peace...With this as the starting point and with the aim of non-alignment and the overcoming of the policy of blocs, one task which may be set democratic Spain is that of helping to go beyond, in the first period, the *bipolar* character of the present balance of forces and transform it into a *multipolar balance* (emphases in original)."²⁴ No distinction is made between the imperialist bloc of aggressors and the socialist countries. Both are described as blocs in the manner of the wretched Social Democrats. It were better that Carrillo openly declared that he does not consider the Soviet Union and other East European countries Socialist countries, and considers them as aggressive as the imperialists. For no one calling himself a Communist will fail to make a distinction and fail to take a partisan attitude towards the socialist camp.

What then, is Carrillo's proposal in practical terms? To build another anti-Soviet bloc of European capitalist countries in the name of a multipolar balance. The European allies of Carrillo will be the West German, French and British imperialists who regard the Soviet as their main enemy and whose idea of European defence is to be aggressive towards the Soviet Union. Spanish democratic socialism is not only unwilling to disturb the present balance of military forces but proposes to strengthen it in favour of the imperialist camp, because it ignores the reality, the existence of two camps—imperialist and socialist. Of course, Carrillo says that the European defence organisation would have well-defined aims: "the first of which should be the preservation of world peace, that of not undertaking any aggressive action against other countries and not intervening in the internal affairs of any State..."²⁵ Can these aims be achieved in cooperation with the West German, French and British imperialist governments and the Right Social Democratic leaders? And to achieve this, is it necessary to form an anti-Soviet bloc?

Liquidation of the Leninist Concept of Party

It is obvious that with such an outlook and programme Carrillo's democratic socialism does not stand in need of the Marxist-Leninist understanding about the Party, the necessity of revolution, the class character of the State and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It rejects the class outlook, the necessity of class leadership and merges the working class and its class institutions with non-working class sections and organisations. For instance, Carrillo says, "The new ideas about the road to Socialism in the developed countries allow certain diversifications with regard to the role and function of the Communist Party. It continues to be the vanguard Party inasmuch as it truly embodies a creative Marxist attitude. But it no longer regards itself as the *only* representative of the working class, of the working people and the forces of culture (emphasis in original). *It recognises, in theory and practice, that other parties which are socialist in tendency can also be representative of particular sections of the working population, although their theoretical and philosophical positions and their internal structure may not be ours* (emphasis ours). It regards as normal and stimulating the competition between different policies and solutions to specific problems, and it has no hesitation in accepting, when circumstances warrant, that others may be more accurate than it in analysing a particular situation. The Marxist method is not our own exclusive property; as Marxism forms part of the universal cultural inheritance, there are parties which, from time to time and even without being aware of what they are doing, may apply it."²⁶

What does this amount to? Marxism-Leninism asserts that the Communist Party, because of its correct scientific outlook wedded to revolutionary practice, plays and must play the vanguard and leading role if the revolution is to succeed. No one has ever claimed infallibility for the Party and its practice, on all occasions, which is why self-criticism and review occupy an important place in the conduct of Party affairs. Nor does a Marxist-Leninist ever claim—and Carrillo should know this—that a Communist Party plays the vanguard role and represents the entire working class just because it says so. Only through unending practical guidance through the entire period of revolution does the Communist Party come to occupy the position of leadership in the eyes of the working class. Carrillo is just wasting his time if he is trying to restate these elementary truths in the name of Eurocommunist diversification on the role of the Party. But it is clear he aims beyond this. He wants to suggest that Marxism-Leninism is not the only scientific outlook. There may be others, equally revolutionary. What else could be meant by the statement, "It recognises, in theory and practice, that other parties which are socialist in tendency, can also be representative of particular sections of the working population, although their theoretical and philosophical positions...may not be ours"? That other 'socialist tendencies', supersti-

tions, may be equally valid and may represent the genuine revolutionary interests of particular sections of the working population; that the Marxist-Leninist outlook does not represent the interests of the entire society, but at best of some sections. Can absurdity and disbandment of Marxism-Leninism go further?

Then Carrillo makes another confusing formulation: "It regards as normal and stimulating the competition between different policies and solutions to specific problems, and it has no hesitation in accepting...that others may be more accurate than it in analysing a particular situation." No serious Communist or Communist Party has ever claimed that every tactical move or tactical solution it offers has been hundred percent correct, that it has not committed mistakes in estimating a given situation and that other non-Marxist parties may have been less erroneous or more correct in regard to a specific situation. Sectarian mistakes are owned up to by the Party; mistakes of Right opportunism, Left sectarianism, over-estimation or under-estimation of a given situation, have not only been frankly acknowledged, but rectified by seeking united fronts with parties and organisations earlier placed in the anti-peoples' camp. These facts are well known. By presenting the matter as if all Communist Parties dogmatically assert that they are always right and are impervious to the reasoning and the experiences of others, Carrillo defaces the image of the Marxist-Leninist Party in the same way as Liberals and Communist-baiters do.

To state that the Party regards as normal and stimulating the competition between different policies and solutions to specific problems, coming from parties with different philosophies, is again a negation of the leading ideological role of the Party. It amounts to giving a permanent charter of existence to non-Marxist, anti-Marxist, and unscientific ideologies. What is the correct attitude? Marxism-Leninism and its Party must wage a relentless ideological struggle against all alien ideologies and their manifestations. People are to be cured of many ideologies through persuasion and debates and by removing the social and economic basis of such ideologies. Administrative measures against advocates of alien ideologies are justified when they become direct weapons of organising counter-revolution and are already isolated from the overwhelming majority of the people. For the rest, the ideological struggle to isolate them from the people must continue till their class character is thoroughly exposed. To describe this as permanent, normal and stimulating competition is wrong.

The fact is that Carrillo considers the Party to be first a political association without a philosophy, economic theory and outlook, and opinions and preferences about the ideological superstructure of our times. "The party as such does not pass judgment except on questions of revolutionary strategy and political tactics."²⁷ Can any party, without a correct understanding of economic theory, and a common outlook

to combat the various theories propagated by the bourgeoisie to cheat the people, have correct revolutionary strategy and political tactics?

Carrillo's conception of a Party member is one who just accepts the political line of the Party and nothing more. Where bourgeois theories are concerned, he is left to shift for himself; he may combat them as he likes or even support them. "The party recognises that, outside collective political tasks, each member is master of his fate, as regards everything affecting his preferences, intellectual or artistic inclinations, and his personal relations. It also recognises that in the sphere of theory, culture and art and in the field of research in the sciences of every kind, including the humanities, different schools may co-exist within it and they should all have the possibility of untrammelled confrontation in its cultural bodies and publications."²⁸

Fostering Liberalism

Carrillo is really on the war-path, determined to tear to shreds the Leninist concept of the proletarian revolutionary Party and reduce it to a worse-than-liberal party. He is perhaps reacting against the deviations seen in some parties. Resolutions on research in science, on literary criticism, on acceptance or rejection of literary or artistic tendencies of the current period were passed and Party members were asked to conform to them. Based on an immature and wrong understanding of the problems, these decisions led to bureaucratic interference in the development of knowledge, besides ending in unfair, persecutive treatment to those who pointed out their erroneous content. All this shows that the Party has to be extremely cautious before it decides to intervene in such issues by giving a concrete line for immediate guidance.

But does it mean that each individual member is free to proclaim his freedom in theory, art, scientific research, without any reference to the basic world outlook of the Party, Marxism-Leninism? When the Party is facing a life-or-death political struggle against fascism, are individual members free to develop personal relations with well-known fascists in their private life? Are they free to propagate anti-Marxist theories in philosophy, economics, science and religion? That would reduce the Party to a band of political adventurers who have nothing in common, no class outlook, no common world outlook, except a desire to grab political power for themselves. This is the final denigration of the Marxist-Leninist Party in the name of freedom for all its members to profess any opinion they like on any subject. The Party's outlook and the outlook of its members is determined by their firm allegiance to Marxism-Leninism and must be consistent with it. Carrillo's idea about the Party, therefore, is a Party which is committed to the parliamentary path, rejects revolution and has only a political programme but no ideology, no world outlook, no philosophy.

On the Leading Role of the Party

Carrillo further liquidates the leading role of the Party in the socialist revolution and in the organisation of socialist society in the following way: "The party does not set itself the aim of becoming the dominant force in the State and society or of imposing its ideology on them on an official footing. The party's mission is to contribute towards ensuring that the forces of labour and culture win political and social hegemony. With this aim, the party does not aspire to win-power as a monopoly for itself, but aspires to a power in which the different political groups representing these forces take part and cooperate, according to their real weight, in emulation for progress, socialism and democracy."²⁹

By using catch phrases familiar to the liberals, Carrillo denigrates the conception of the Party's leadership. Why should not the Marxist-Leninist Party aspire to become the dominant force in the State, that is, win over the majority of the working class and its toiling allies and put its stamp on the State and the organisation of society? What canons of democracy are violated by it in doing so? The dominant position here is acquired through correct guidance during the revolution, successful completion of the revolution and a correct perspective regarding the future. Winning over the majority is not achieved through fiat. But Carrillo is against this leading role, this 'dominant' role. He proclaims that in principle the Party of the working class should never aim at winning over the vast majority but must allow other parties (which may formally profess socialism), including parties representing capitalist interests, to hold at least partial sway over the people. Religious groups, the Church, the obscurantists, the petty bourgeoisie, all must be allowed to have some influence over the people. This is a plea for a permanent division of the working class and the people, for a permanent united front with non-revolutionary parties and ideologies, which certainly will not lead to socialism. The proviso that these political groups will have influence only according to their real weight, in emulation for progress, socialism, and so on, has no meaning. They will play an anti-socialist, anti-revolutionary role, unless their ideologies are challenged and their political influence eroded by demonstrating the superiority of Marxism-Leninism.

Statements that the leading role of the Party is not one of domination, that it cannot be achieved through force or by somehow getting rid of other parties, are unhistorical and alien to Marxism-Leninism. The leading role arises when the majority of the masses willingly accept, the leadership of the Party and show their faith in it. The concept also includes growing and close cooperation with parties and ideologies closer to the people. The parties of revolutionary democracy, and ideologies expressing the strivings of sections of toilers in an unclear way—all will

have to be given their proper place. In a country like India there will have to be cooperation and coalition with such parties till they themselves accept the superiority of Marxism-Leninism. This is because Marxist-Leninist ideology cannot be imposed on the people. It will be accepted only to the extent that people see its correctness. Its acceptance by the people is entirely voluntary.

Thus, at different stages of the revolutionary struggle, the Party forms a united front with several other parties professing different ideologies. Such a united front is often rendered necessary after the revolution also. It would include parties and ideologies which have loyally stood by the people during the revolution. Subsequent evolution depends on how quickly these groups and parties overcome the limitations of their ideologies, and join the mainstream represented by Marxism-Leninism. It is fatuous to believe that in the organisation of revolution and the new society, ideologies which have nothing in common with Marxism-Leninism can play an equally responsible role along with the Party. But for Carrillo, Marxism-Leninism is not the quintessence of the experience of proletarian revolutions and revolutionary struggles waged under its banner. It represents only one of the many currents in the present-day world.

The concept of the hegemony of the Party, its leading role, is replaced by its merger in a united front. "In this order of things, the role which we communists used to attribute to the party in other periods as the instrument of the hegemony of the working people in society would correspond today, in the theoretical sense, to what we have called the *new political formation*. The idea of the *new political formation* is linked with that of the hegemony of the bloc of the forces of labour and culture in society (not the hegemony of the working class). It is certain that every social force needs a political instrument in order to play its part. We ourselves, although we have a preference for our own party, consider that it is not the only political instrument; nor are other parties, taken in isolation. The conjunction of all of them can certainly be so. That conjunction will have common characteristics and also characteristics which differ. The common features could be: a minimum programme, socialist and democratic; common bodies which would work out and study the solutions to all kinds of problems of present-day society...The differing features might be: a philosophy or theory of its own for each party or social organisation making up the new formation (emphases in original)."⁸⁰

The question here is not whether each political party, representing varied class interests, wants an instrument in order to play its part, but rather, which party can be the instrument of realising the hegemony of the working class. Carrillo says that a party based on Marxism-Leninism alone cannot be such an instrument and that parties which reject Marxism-Leninism can also be an instrument of realising the hegemony.

Apart from the absurdity of the statement, it means merger of the Party with parties not accepting Marxism-Leninism in the united front. An idea that is entirely consistent with Carrillo's plan to disband every class concept from his Eurocommunist ideology.

Unhistorical, Non-class Concept of Democracy

It is good that Carrillo, who displays unbounded confidence in his own judgment when demolishing one basic concept of Marxism after another, feels a little hesitant, a little aware of his theoretical insufficiency when dealing with the dictatorship of the proletariat. "I must confess that in attempting to tackle this subject I feel myself to be of too small a stature in face of its magnitude. I am very far from regarding myself as a theoretician. I regard myself as a modest Marxist political worker."⁸¹ However, this declaration of modesty does not prevent him from indulging in his own acrobatic interpretation of the concept.

He believes that democracy is not the historical creation of the bourgeoisie, but has been in existence in all periods of history and will continue to be under Communism. He does not accept that democracy is a particular kind of State, and that when classes disappear, the State will disappear and so also democracy, there being no one to rule over. "Perhaps it is the case that, having lived through that grim experience we have achieved a better understanding of the fact that *democracy is not an historical creation of the bourgeoisie*, as we came to believe in the days when our obsession was above all else to draw a line between ourselves and 'bourgeois democracy' and affirm the class stand and class ideology of the working people in face of it (emphasis in original)."⁸² There has always been democracy—during the period of Roman slavery, feudal serfdom, the Spanish Inquisition and so on. It is the constant accompaniment of all human society. It appears to be a human phenomenon, not a historical, and much less a class, phenomenon.

Carrillo further states: "In reality, democracy, in various forms, antedates the existence of the bourgeoisie as such and will survive beyond class society, the State, socialism."⁸³ In all earlier societies, only the ruling classes had liberty and freedom and the laws and customs more or less openly stated so. It is only in bourgeois society where, while the ruling power is exercised by the expropriating classes, general democratic principles, namely, equality, liberty, and so on, are declared to be the bases of society. These principles and the rights following from them, while they are a big advance over feudal serfdom, are totally insufficient to liquidate the unjust rule of the bourgeoisie. In relation to the objective of abolition of exploitation, they remain formal rights, and constitute formal democracy. But Carrillo does not accept this. He must commit the elementary mistake of all non-Marxian democrats who divorce democracy from its class content, who divorce it from the con-

ditions of its historical existence and proclaim that there has always been democracy. He refuses to understand that democracy as he understands it—bourgeois democracy—was born out of specific historical conditions, and that earlier societies based on status and declared inequalities could not be described as democracies.

Another point at which Carrillo's breach with Marxism is evident is where he says, democracy will continue even under Communism. Now he describes democracy as active participation of all in the administration of society. Carrillo has here quietly substituted Engels' words "administration of things" by the words "administration of society." According to Marx and Engels, under Communism there is no State. Lenin points out that since democracy is a kind of State, it also disappears under Communism. The conduct of people is no longer regulated by an external law, but is determined by social habits and public opinion. Engels therefore says that administration of men is replaced by "administration of things." But Carrillo holds that the State must exist under Communism.

ON THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

Carrillo is certainly not being modest when he challenges Lenin and says he was only half-right when he said, "the transition from capitalism to communism naturally cannot fail to provide an immense abundance and diversity of political forms, but the essence of all of them will necessarily be a single one, the *dictatorship of the proletariat* (emphasis in original)." Carrillo's comment on this well-known pronouncement of Lenin reads thus: "He was no more than half right because the essence of all the various political forms of transition to socialism is, as we can judge today, *the hegemony of the working people*, while *the diversity and abundance of political forms* likewise entails the possibility of *the dictatorship of the proletariat not being necessary* (emphases in original)."⁸⁴ Only a person devoid of the most elementary understanding would make such a formulation. To pose hegemony against the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is nothing but an exhibition of Carrillo's ignorance.

The hegemony of the working class in the State, its firm and unremitting guidance to the State to defeat capitalism and build a new society, to crush all conspiracies against socialism, is precisely what is meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat. Carrillo graciously concedes that in Russia it was right to work for the dictatorship of the proletariat, that Kautsky was wrong in his controversy with Lenin. However, he pleads that the advanced European countries represent quite different conditions, making dictatorship unnecessary. In advancing this argument, Carrillo commits a number of mistakes. First, he thinks proletarian dictatorship had to come in Russia because the working class was in a minority and therefore had to take power and maintain its rule by force. Secondly, he identifies proletarian dictatorship with violence only.

Thirdly, he considers the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the manner of all Social Democrats, in isolation from its connection and relationship with the labouring masses, with the other toiling sections.

Carrillo argues: "What then are we going to do with the idea of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*? Why does this conception arise—one which Marx, in a letter to Weydemeyer (5 March 1852), emphasised as one of his essential *discoveries*? The question that presents itself, in essence, is whether the working people in the developed capitalist countries can impose their hegemony without resorting to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is to a more or less lengthy period of transition during which the political rights of the defeated classes and their supporters are suppressed (emphases in original)."³⁶ (It is obvious Carrillo is very much concerned with the political rights of the exploiting gentry).

Liberal Talk about Minority Revolution

Now follows what is exceedingly obvious to Carrillo: "It seems to me obvious that in the days of Marx and Engels, even in the most developed countries, the conscious section of the proletariat which, in a revolutionary crisis, would have been able to take power into its hands (and, in most of the countries, the proletariat as such) was a minority of the population that could only take power by force of arms and hold on to it and begin the transformation of society by *force*, that is, by *dictatorship* (emphases in original)".³⁶

This 'obvious' reasoning is, of course, without any historical and real foundation. Marx and Engels never based the necessity of revolution and dictatorship on the working class being in a minority, but related it to organs of class violence in the hands of the capitalists and their State. To represent the proletarian revolution as a minority revolution has been the class propaganda of the opponents of Communism. Carrillo's arguments only help them.

Persisting in this false reasoning, Carrillo says the following about the Russian Revolution: "The Russian communists found themselves in the same situation in 1917 when their proletariat, which was very concentrated and was the most conscious and most revolutionary in the world, constituted a tiny minority in the country, 'a drop in the ocean of the petty bourgeoisie', predominantly peasant. In such circumstances the notion of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* was not just a synonym for *hegemony of the proletariat*, for *social domination* of the proletariat; the notion of *dictatorship* was the inevitable means with which to succeed in consolidating the *hegemony*, the *social domination* of the proletariat. Marx, Engels and Lenin were conscious of that reality (emphases in original)."³⁷

Once again, this makes nonsense of the history of the Russian Revolution and the role of the working class. It is of course a fact that

the Russian working class was a small minority of the Russian population. However, the Revolution and the proletarian dictatorship did not arise because of this minority character of the Russian working class, but because of the Czarist State apparatus of violence and the need to overthrow it. The dictatorship was rendered necessary to crush the violent resistance of the capitalist class. Besides, violence was not the only function, not even the major function of the proletarian dictatorship.

Democracy for the Majority

The Russian working class, which was in a minority, did not fight the battle alone. It fought for the democratic revolution in alliance with the peasantry as a whole; it waited patiently to secure the majority in the Soviets, the majority support of the people, the support of the vast mass of poor peasants and agricultural workers, before it gave the call for proletarian revolution. The proletarian revolution was not the handiwork of a minority but had the support of the majority of the toilers and the people. The dictatorship of the proletariat became necessary not because the revolution had no support from the majority, but because the minority classes took to violence. These are well known facts of history and should be known to Carrillo. But the exigencies of revisionism have no regard for history.

Carrillo ascribes to the dictatorship of the proletariat only the functions of suppression and violence, forgetting other important tasks, thereby virtually slandering the State of the proletariat. This, though Lenin had clearly stated that: "The dictatorship of the proletariat is not only the use of force against the exploiters and not even mainly the use of force. The economic foundation of this revolutionary force, the guarantee of its virility and its success, is in the fact that the proletariat represents and carries out a higher type of social organisation of labour compared with capitalism. This is the essence. This is the source of the strength and the guarantee of the inevitable complete triumph of Communists." Again: "The quintessence (of the dictatorship of the proletariat) is the organisation and discipline of the advanced detachment of the working people, of their vanguard, their sole leader, the proletariat, whose object is to build socialism, to abolish the division of society into classes, to make all members of society working people, to remove the basis of every kind of exploitation of man by man." Compare this clear-cut programme with the programme of Carrillo's democratic socialism and one can see the difference and understand Carrillo's aversion to proletarian dictatorship.

Further, Carrillo should understand that even when the proletariat is in a minority, proletarian dictatorship is dictatorship only against the capitalists and other exploiters while it is an alliance with the toiling millions, that is, it is democracy for ninety eight percent of the people.

Lenin says, "The dictatorship of the proletariat is a special form of class alliance between the proletariat, the vanguard of the working people (the petty bourgeoisie, the small proprietors, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, and so on), or the majority of these; it is an alliance against capital, an alliance aiming at the complete overthrow of capital, at the complete suppression of the resistance of the bourgeoisie and of any attempt on its part at restoration, an alliance aiming at the final establishment and consolidation of socialism...an alliance between classes which differ economically, politically, socially and ideologically."

Carrillo turns a blind eye to Lenin's teachings in order to be able to slander the Marxist concept. For him, proletarian dictatorship is a product of minority politics, its main purpose is violence, and it is unsupported by the majority of the people.

Illusions about Pure Democracy

In relation to the dictatorship of the proletariat—the concept as presented by Marx, Engels and Lenin—it is clear that Carrillo is very much concerned with the restrictions and limitations on, or the withdrawal of, the rights of the exploiting gentry. He wants the proletarian State to ensure these rights in the name of democracy. His argument is, suppression of these rights might have been necessary when the proletariat formed the minority in a country, but since in developed countries it constitutes a majority, pure democracy can be installed, with all the exploiters ensured their rights of economic exploitation and political organisation, that is, with no coercion applied to them in any form whatsoever. "In the developed countries of Europe and the capitalist world, however, the working people are today the great majority of society; and the forces of culture, with their great ideological significance and their large numbers, are drawing closer to the positions of the working class. It is plain that such a situation is very different from those in which Marx, Engels and Lenin considered the *dictatorship of the proletariat* to be necessary (emphasis in original)."⁸⁸

We have already seen the hollowness, the non Marxist character, of the argument regarding minority, and so on. It is, however, a fact that a large number of non-working class sections in the developed countries are drawing close to the positions of the working class. (Carrillo's reasoning shows that a section of the working class is also adapting itself to the positions of the non-working class sections, instead of leading them forward). This certainly facilitates the task of isolating the ruling class and is a manifestation of the realities exposed by the crisis of the system. But does this mean that the ruling classes and their representatives have become less assertive, less aggressive and more democratic? What makes Carrillo feel that the ruling classes will part with their power peacefully, accept the democratic verdicts of the proletarian State willingly and voluntarily, and help in taking the country

to socialism, especially when Carrillo's democratic socialism assures them the democratic right to exploit and form their own political organisation?

What about the weapons of repression piled up by the bourgeois States? Does not Carrillo know that one aspect of the advance of the bourgeois States, is nothing but the perfection of its machinery against the working class, the centralisation of the administration and the establishment of a bureaucracy, tied through a number of connections with the maintenance of the class establishment? It is, however, suggested that when the properties of multinationals, monopolists and capitalists worth billions of dollars are involved, when social ownership is proposed these interests will await the democratic verdict of the people and faithfully obey it. They will not use their power and indulge in violence and repression to defeat the people.

Role of Imperialism Ignored

The strangest part of the argument is that it deliberately ignores the world power of capitalism,—namely, imperialism—armed to the teeth and sufficiently powerful to intervene in any condition and in many ways against the working class. The experience of Chile is there, but Carrillo has no use for it. For, he has made up his mind that such things will not happen in advanced Europe. Unfortunately for Carrillo, open intervention by the American and West German imperialists took place in the last Italian elections. Once again, the American imperialists openly intervened to prevent the CP of Italy from entering the coalition ministry. The representatives of the capitalist class welcomed the intervention and bowed down to it. And yet this was only a question of forming a coalition ministry with the trusted representatives of the bourgeoisie. Is it difficult to imagine what form this intervention might assume if the very basis of bourgeois society is undermined? And should Carrillo, of all persons, forget that Franco, the butcher, was foisted on the Spanish people by the fascists and imperialists, that but for their support to him, the Republic would not have been defeated, that through his four decades of infamous rule, he was sustained by the USA and other imperialists?

In short, utopian illusions about the good behaviour of the bourgeoisie can be spread only by ignoring the existence of imperialism.

Surrender to Bourgeois Pressure

Finally, can it be argued that the monopolists in each of these developed countries are so isolated today that they have lost the social base to use the apparatus of repression or to sabotage the march to socialism? The ideological influence of capitalism, the influence of its superstructure, will be used to undermine proletarian democratic rule. There are a thousand and one ties which bind sections of the people

to the present order and which are exploited by the vested interests. Ties of religion, the influence of the Church and the Pope, of theories of society and social justice, and of all kinds of idealism, together with economic ties with the old order, offer readymade material to the conspirators. Unless firm measures are taken against them, along with measures to release the masses from the ideological influence of the old society, socialism will not be safe. But Carrillo makes it a matter of principle to reject the dictatorship of the proletariat. "I therefore regard it as logical that the communist and socialist parties of the developed capitalist west should establish, not just their tactics, but their entire strategy on the basis of the democratic process."⁸⁰ His reasoning flows from bourgeois pressure. The liberals and social democrats have attacked Marxists for their concept of dictatorship and have exploited some of the mistakes of proletarian rule for this purpose. Overwhelmed, Carrillo wants to abandon this revolutionary concept to ensure credibility for his Party with the liberals: "In actual fact, the lack of democratic 'credibility' of us communists among certain sections of the population in our countries is associated—rather than with our own activity and policy—with the fact that in countries where capitalist ownership has disappeared, the dictatorship of the proletariat has been implanted with a one-party system, as a general rule, and has undergone various bureaucratic distortions and even very grave processes of degeneration."⁸¹ The distortions in the functioning of the dictatorship of the proletariat have to be no doubt mercilessly criticised, all shortcomings and weaknesses to be removed. The toiling people administering their own State for the first time in history were bound to commit mistakes. But is that any reason to throw overboard the basic concept of the proletarian State? That State achieved mighty successes in spite of grave mistakes. Unemployment has been abolished, crisis done away with, and exploitation put an end to under the proletarian State. Have these results been achieved anywhere else, notwithstanding the vaunted democracy and democratic socialism of many countries? Carrillo, in his blind opposition to proletarian dictatorship ignores the mighty achievements of the Socialist States, for if he does not it would be difficult to reject the concept. He forgets that it was this proletarian dictatorship that barred the way to Hitler's conquest of Europe, while all the bourgeois democracies lay at his feet, betraying the people, their country and the working class.

REVISIONIST FALSIFICATION

Ignoring this evidence of history, the organisational role of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Carrillo makes the following statements: "The schema of a proletarian state outlined by Lenin in *The State and Revolution* has not been realised anywhere, and least of all in the country which has been presented to us and still is being presented to us today

as the ideal model.”⁴¹ “If all States are instruments for the domination of one class over another and if in the USSR there are no antagonistic classes and objectively there is no need to suppress other classes, then over whom does that State exercise domination?”⁴² This is asked of a State, ten millions of whose citizens were slaughtered by Hitler during the anti-fascist war, and whose capacity to fight saved Europe. Having posed this question, Carrillo proceeds to argue that: “The October Revolution has produced a State which is evidently not a bourgeois State (Thank you very much, Comrade Carrillo), but neither is it as yet the proletariat organised as the ruling class, or a genuine workers’ democracy.”⁴³ The Soviet State has no doubt committed many mistakes. But can one ignore that it has built socialism, abolished exploitation of man by man and organised a new society? Like the Devil shunning the Holy Water, Carrillo shuns reality. Perhaps, in his view the CPSU has successfully refuted Marxism by abolishing capitalism, without establishing a proletarian State.

In passing it should be noted that Carrillo, while describing the distortions of the proletarian State in the Soviet Union, resorts to ill-informed theories and historical judgments. A large part of his argument is lifted from bourgeois writers and baiters of Marxism. He would have been on far surer ground had he confined his criticism to certain obvious deviations and at the same time maintained a historical balance in criticising them. But determined to denigrate the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, he offers all kinds of comments and theories to explain them. Discussing the two phases of Communist society, Carrillo rewrites the history of the Soviet Union. His purpose is to show that it is not socialism that has been established in the Soviet Union but some kind of capitalism and the distortions represent the type of State required for the purpose. “We must ask ourselves whether the type of State which developed in the Soviet Union, and in particular the dictatorial system associated with the name of Stalin, with all its excesses, abuses and arbitrary acts, was not the consequence of that function which consisted in carrying out primary accumulation, in developing modern industry at all costs.”⁴⁴ Teaching Marx and Engels, Carrillo writes: “In those (schemes) drawn up by Marx and Engels, apart from the two phases mentioned (socialism and communism), no account was taken of another in which the power of the State created by the revolution would have to tackle the realisation of *primary capitalist accumulation*, indispensable for undertaking modern production (emphasis in original).”⁴⁵ One cannot congratulate Carrillo on his theoretical level, though he must be admired for the confidence with which wild judgments are made. Is Carrillo not aware of the discussion in the Soviet Union on the question of socialist accumulation? Haven’t Lenin, Stalin and other Soviet leaders tackled this question? Or is he the first in the world to realise this problem? And on what basis does Carrillo argue that the

working class must tackle the question of primary capitalist accumulation? This is merely returning to the Menshevik illusion that socialism cannot be established in a backward country without first going through all stages of capitalist development. The passing over of the democratic revolution into socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class, the process of replacing private accumulation with socialist accumulation, of not expropriating small producers as under private accumulation, but persuading them to go in for cooperatives and collectives, and so on—these achievements are either unknown to Carrillo or he deliberately denies them in the service of anti-Marxism.

The judgment passed on the Soviet State, its Five Year Plans, its fight against Hitler, the rise in the standard of living of the people, the abolition of unemployment and crisis is that: "The present Soviet State has certainly carried out the functions of achieving development in the economic, industrial and cultural fields, and in the field of health, and also in that of national defence. In other words, it has carried out tasks which in other countries of advanced capitalism have been carried out by the capitalist State."⁴⁶ No socialism of course, only capitalism has been worked out. But, "having suppressed capitalist property, it has created the conditions for going over to evolved socialism. The question that now arises is whether the actual structures of that State have not been transformed, at least in part, into an obstacle to evolved socialism; whether that State, as it now exists, is not in itself already a brake on the development of a real working-class democracy and, in addition, whether it has not constituted a brake on the country's material development."⁴⁷ In effect, Carrillo states that the present society is not socialist but virtually capitalist, with conditions for evolved socialism; the Soviet State which has been discharging the functions of the advanced capitalist State is now a brake and it must be changed to make it fully democratic—ala Carrillo—to give full freedom to all including the exploiters to exercise their rights and form their political parties. President Carter may fully agree and endorse Carrillo's thesis.

If Carrillo were to argue that some of the current policies pursued by the Soviet leaders are harming material development and the further flowering of Democracy, one may agree with him. The leaders of the CPSU, after the 20th Congress of the CPSU, started describing their State as the State of the whole people and not as a dictatorship of the proletariat. They also gave an unmarxist and deviationist definition of the scientific concept to suit their revisionist liberalism. The Czechoslovak experience with the State of the whole people made them aware of the danger of their opportunism and they began to emphasize that the State of the whole people was fulfilling the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A large part of Carrillo's argument is borrowed from Soviet revisionist statements made as a response against Stalin's mistakes and abuses.

On the basis of the understanding noted above, Carrillo not only rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat for Spain, but demands its total rejection by all advanced capitalist countries. He wrongly bases the need for dictatorship on the working class being in a minority and deliberately ignores the centralised apparatus of repression in the hands of the ruling classes. His demand is for full democratic rights to all exploiters. He exploits the mistakes in the functioning of some of the proletarian regimes, especially the Soviet State, to defame the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and divest the world working class of its most powerful weapon. To strengthen his argument, he totally ignores the economic achievements of the dictatorship of the proletariat, its role in building a new society.

Monopoly-dominated State and its Isolation

To make his thesis of peaceful transformation plausible, Carrillo suitably revises the analysis of the modern capitalist State and its confrontation with present-day society. He is correct when he states that the State in advanced capitalist countries is dominated by the monopolists, serves their interests and is often in conflict with the interests of other sections of the bourgeoisie. "And since it is the *director* State which no longer serves the interests of the whole of the bourgeoisie, but only of that part which controls the big monopolistic groups—economically fundamental but, humanly speaking, very small,— it is now confronted, in its capacity as such a State, not only by the advanced proletariat but also directly by the broadest social classes and strata, including part of the bourgeoisie: it is entering into direct conflict with the greater part of society (emphasis in original)."⁴⁸

What conclusion does Carrillo draw from this? In his view, now there is no necessity of revolution. Since the monopolists are isolated from other sections of the bourgeoisie, also their State can be defeated by a peaceful democratic verdict in favour of socialism. The isolation of the monopolist State, and its conflict with non-monopolist bourgeois interests no doubt help the working class to form joint fronts and forge ahead with mass agitations, parliamentary alliances and secure electoral advance and successes. Such broad based fronts and movements are absolutely essential for the proletarian Party to have access to the majority of the people, to carry its programme to them. But these electoral successes in curbing or isolating the monopolists are secured within the existing framework and offer no mandate for basic social changes or basic changes in the State structure. The presumption is that the monopolists will calmly wait for the consequences of elections affecting their basic property rights. How difficult it is to secure a majority vote for a radicalist programme through parliamentary channels is shown by the results of the recent French elections where the left socialists refused to support even the programme for nationalisation of many monopoly

concerns. Only the direct revolutionary activity of the masses brings about a radical change in the consciousness of the people. Further, it is absurd to imagine that the other sections of the bourgeoisie who are opposed to the monopolists will peacefully cooperate with the proletarian Party to change the nature of ownership, expropriate the capitalists and end exploitation. This is a new thesis—because the non-monopolist bourgeoisie is opposed to the monopolist State, it will cooperate with the proletariat in a peaceful revolution to divest itself of its economic power. Carrillo realises this difficulty and he makes his democratic socialism completely acceptable to the bourgeoisie by promising prolonged existence to capitalism—to private capital and the multinationals.

The monopolist State is no doubt getting more and more isolated and there is broader opposition to it. Yet it is a ferocious State and has immense means of deluding the masses. It has got enough support and striking power to wage a violent struggle. Its defeat is inevitable if the opposing forces are marshalled properly, but to argue that this battle will be fought peacefully and according to the norms of an electoral battle, is to mislead the people and give a certificate of democratic good conduct to the monopolists.

A NEW STRATEGY FOR REVOLUTION

A victim of this illusion, Carrillo announces a new grand strategy for his peaceful revolution. "*The strategy of the revolutions of today, in the developed capitalist countries, must be oriented towards turning these ideological apparatuses round, to transform them and utilise them if not wholly then partly—against the State power of monopoly capitalism (emphasis in original).*"⁴⁰

It is clear the strategy is not class struggle, not even electoral battles, but capturing the ideological apparatus and through it quietly achieving power. "Modern experience has shown that this is possible, and that this is the key—except in the case of war or an economic and political catastrophe, difficult to imagine today in the developed countries—to the democratic transformation of the State apparatus."⁴⁰ We do not know which modern experience Carrillo is referring to for we have yet to see a monopoly State transformed in this manner. Carrillo himself forgets that he describes States in developed capitalist countries as States ruled by the monopolists. Which of these States has been transformed and which country has provided the people with this rich experience?

Like Bernstein, Carrillo presents his case for the rejection of revolution on the basis of the possibility of converting the organs of capitalist State into people's organs. He assures us that without depriving the capitalist class of the ownership of the means of production in the advanced European countries, the people can gradually secure way over the ideological apparatus of the State. They can have their sway over

the radio, the T V and the press and gradually relax the shackles of capitalist ideology which bind the people. In Carrillo's words: "It is clear that a radical change in the use of these powerful instruments is impossible without a change of political power. But the struggle for the democratic control of the media such as television and radio, in such a way that the various forces of society, and not only the rulers, may find expression through them; the drawing up of laws to guarantee genuine press freedom—that is to say, the *material* possibility for all the great political and social forces to possess their own organs of expression, which goes much further than the freedom of the press, although it is not incompatible with it: these are steps which can enable the forces of change to undertake a struggle from within what today are ideological apparatuses of society (emphasis in original)."⁶¹

"The problem which we must tackle is, in substance, *the struggle to win positions, dominating as far as possible, for revolutionary ideas in what are today the ideological apparatuses of society*, those on which the authority and moral and material force of the capitalist state are based; and this as much in the Church as in education, culture, the system of relationships among political forces, the information media (emphasis in original)."⁶² It is perfectly correct to state that the ideological battle should be carried to the media, the ideological apparatus of the State. In many countries, freedom regarding these has been comparatively wider than in others. Besides, a certain show of liberalism, of non-partisanship on the part of the media, suits the capitalist States, providing them with a democratic facade. But peaceful advance on this front also has its limitations and the ideological apparatus of the capitalist State will not be easily surrendered to the anti-capitalist and socialist forces. For this a real victory in the class struggle and the capture of political power is essential. It is illusory to imagine that the forces of socialism, forces representing revolutionary ideas will gradually attain dominating positions in the ideological apparatus of the capitalist State. However, Carrillo has convinced himself that the capitalists have embraced Gandhian non-violence and will not resist this trend by anti-democratic means. The burden of his thesis is that capitalism is so exposing itself that it has virtually lost its social base, all its following and that there is none to resist on its behalf. It will therefore always bow down to the popular will.

No doubt, Carrillo also talks about the mass struggle of the people. "In speaking of political, social and cultural struggle, we bear in mind, in the first place, the value of the direct experience of the broadest masses in the struggle for their specific interests and for genuine participation in social decisions, to guarantee their defence. For this reason it becomes essential to promote action by the working class and the sectors affected by monopoly capitalism, to achieve the linking-up of these actions, to raise the people's struggles, overcoming narrowness of outlook, sectionalism, and the parish pump approach, and to

bring together the economic, cultural, social and other demands with the demand for an ever more profound democratisation of society."⁵³ But this struggle, as the entire argument of Carrillo goes, is not to be a revolutionary struggle, which would transgress the norms of bourgeois democracy. It will not therefore settle the question of power.

Win over the Coercive Apparatus

Carrillo reinforces his rejection of revolution with another argument—that relating to the coercive apparatus of the State. Carrillo's plan is one of "struggling by *political and ideological means* (emphasis ours), with the aim of establishing a new conception of public order, a more civilised one, based on the idea of the defence of the entire population and not just the interests of a privileged minority."⁵⁴ In our country the bourgeois leaders of the Congress have been telling the people and the police that the latter must serve the former, that they are the servants of the people. The reality, however, has been that they have been the instruments of repression and anyone sympathising with the people is immediately dismissed. Now Carrillo embraces the same illusion to dispense with the necessity of a revolution and violence. All that is necessary is to educate the police. "The forces of public order, the police, should exist to defend society from anti-social elements, to control traffic, to protect the population. Popular demonstrations and strikes are not conflicts of public order, except when governments launch the police against them."⁵⁵

"Modern society would be more secure if the police concentrated on the pursuit of theft and crime, and on tracking down anti-social elements who traffic in drugs; if they defended society against increasing gang aggressions; and if they patrolled the roads more effectively to prevent the many fatal accidents..."⁵⁶ In short, if they stopped acting as policemen, as instruments of capitalist rule without the revolutionary overthrow of that rule. Absurdity cannot go further. Carrillo seeks to divest the capitalist State of its coercive class character by just enlightening propaganda among policemen.

It may be mentioned in passing that Carrillo argues as if Communist parties before him did not pay attention to winning over the police and the army to their side. The Communist International enjoined on all parties to work in the Army. Engels long ago had said that further revolutions would not be successful without winning over a substantial part of the army. Carrillo, however, sows the illusion that the coercive apparatus can be won over just through ideological and democratic propaganda. He forgets that while ideological propaganda is necessary, the decisive shift in the apparatus takes place when it is faced by a determined people in the course of a revolutionary struggle. That struggle splits the enemy's apparatus and facilitates revolutionary victory.

But Carrillo argues for conquering the army without deposing the bourgeoisie from power. "The army and society as it exists must be brought together, This, in the first place, poses the question of the social position of the officers and senior military commanders... *Today, the military cadre should occupy in the country the role of a technician, a scientist, an intellectual educator of men skilled in protecting our territory from outside attack* (emphasis in original)"⁶⁷ "Hence a democratic military policy must, to begin with, set out to reform the system of officers' training, which would have to take the forms of a mixed system of training in both the specifically military academies and in the university."⁶⁸ Train the officers, train the policemen to behave; that is the new talisman to achieve socialism without revolution. Further, it should be noted that Carrillo's military policy devotes almost exclusive attention to officers and not to the ranks.

There will be no quarrel with Carrillo if he were to argue that the modern armed forces will become less and less reliable for the bourgeoisie with the intensification of the crisis, and therefore the victory of the revolution will be easier than before. There will be no quarrel with him if he asks the CPs to bear this in mind and devote more attention to the armed forces. But Carrillo wants to lay down that by sheer training and propaganda the forces will be won over, and revolution will be rendered unnecessary.

The Experience of May 1968 in France

The instance of the wavering in the French Army cited by Carrillo goes against him. "In this respect, May 1968 in France was an interesting experience. At the outset the forces of public order operated with brutality; but in the course of the struggle these forces resisted their being used by authority as a repressive instrument against the people. A series of stands was taken in the professional police unions which protested against being used by the authorities and showed a wish not to confront the people. Some moments of wavering also occurred within the army."⁶⁹ With the working class occupying the factories for three weeks, and wavering in the police and the army, big results should have followed. But, as is known, nothing resulted except miserable parliamentary elections which went in favour of De Gaulle. Why? Carrillo responds: "Perhaps the reason why these tendencies did not go further was that, at that time, there was no real alternative power facing the established power. The left was disunited. I think it is not unjust to say that the political forces representing it were taken by surprise by the magnitude of the crisis and were not ready to overcome the disunity and lack of preparation in the short time during which the disturbance of the established power lasted."⁶⁰ In short, there was no revolutionary will, determination and organisation to measure the depth of the crisis and utilise the factors for forging ahead. The vacillations in the coer-

cive power, therefore, could not develop into a revolution against the established regime. What else could be the result if the main part of the working class, the CP, believed in the peaceful parliamentary path?

Extreme Subjectivism

Having in principle rejected revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, Carrillo indulges in extreme subjectivism in interpreting and understanding the developments in advanced capitalist countries. There is no doubt that there is more awakening, more awareness of the inequities of the present system and that the continued crisis is calling into question many of its postulates. Religious belief, the influence of the Church, and the traditional outlook are all being challenged in various ways. A certain amount of political instability is to be seen in a number of countries where elected parliaments are not able to run their full terms, and yet it is an illusion to think that this new awakening is strong and deep enough to bring about a social change or set the countries concerned firmly on the road to achieve such a change. It is still a protest, an awakening within the framework of the existing order, without the realisation that qualitative changes in the entire social set-up are necessary and that to accomplish them hard battles are inevitable. Illusions about easy parliamentary pickings still persist. The radical mood combined with faith in parliamentarism, is reflected in the growth of the massive left vote. Carrillo exaggerates this process of awakening, overestimates its intensity and the isolation of the bourgeoisie, and instead of suggesting quick steps to hasten the process of mass disillusionment, he panders to their illusions about the ruling classes and their democratic behaviour and hinders the process of revolutionary awakening. His faith in peaceful transformation is nothing but the reflection of the parliamentary illusions of broad sections in advanced countries.

Having written an entire epic singing the glories of peaceful transformation, having shown the magic way to winning over the entire coercive apparatus of the monopolist State, Carrillo perhaps develops doubts about his thesis. Being opposed to dogmatism, he does not want to be dogmatic and ends his discussion on the subject with the following. "It may be that the transformation of the present State of monopoly capital into a State fit for the exercise of the hegemony of the anti-monopolist socialist forces and, specifically, of the new historic bloc, the alliance of the forces of labour and culture—it may be that this cannot be won solely through political action and democratic government measures; it can happen that at a given moment it may be necessary to reduce by *force* resistance by *force*; that is to say that the qualitative transformation of this apparatus may not be entirely peaceful and a democratic government may find itself confronted with an attempted coup (emphases in original)."⁸¹ So the fundamental principle of peaceful and democratic transformation proclaimed by Carrillo disappears here.

Reality cannot be totally screened. May be, Carrillo may move to the correct path again. It may be added that the working class and its Party would very much like to have social transformations peacefully, without shedding a drop of human blood. But the ruling classes who will lose their overlordship of society will not allow it. That is class reality—the crux of the matter which Carrillo ignores.

Revisionism in all periods seeks to achieve the same thing—revision of the doctrine of class struggle. Writing about Bernstein's revisionism, Lenin said: "In the sphere of politics revisionism did really try to revise the foundation of Marxism, namely, the doctrine of the class struggle...It cannot be disputed that these arguments of the revisionists amounted to a fairly well-balanced system of views, namely, the old and well-known liberal-bourgeois views. The liberals have always said that bourgeois parliamentarism destroys classes and class divisions since the right to vote and the right to participate in state affairs are shared by all citizens without discrimination."^{6a} It is clear Carrillo is singing the same old song.^{6b}

¹ Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, Schocken Book, New York.

² Santiago Carrillo, *Eurocommunism and the State*, Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, London, 1977, p 127.

³ *Ibid*, p 124.

⁴ *Ibid*, p 125.

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ *Ibid*, p 149.

⁷ *Ibid*, p 77.

⁸ *Ibid*.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p 80.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p 105.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ Bourgeois chauvinism to the point of aggressive colonialism is the inevitable accompaniment of revisionism, as was shown by Bernstein. He anticipated the major formulations of Eurocommunism by half-a-century and it was this ideology that led to the support of the first imperialist world war causing the collapse of the Second International.

What did Bernstein write about foreign policy and colonies? "The doctrine of the European balance of power seems to many to be out of date today, and so it is in its old form. But in a changed form the balance of power still plays a great part in the decision of vexed international questions...I consider it a legitimate task of German imperial politics to secure a right to have a voice in the discussion of such cases, and to oppose, on principle, proper steps to that end, I consider, falls outside the domains of the tasks of Social Democracy." See Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, p 172. That is, support the ambitions of German imperialism

when imperialist rivalries had broken out in the struggle for partition of the world.

The acquisition of China's Kianchaow Bay is endorsed. "It was a matter of free trade with and in China. It was thus only a question whether Germany should look on quietly whilst, by the accomplishment of one deed after another, China fell ever more and more into dependence on Russia, or whether Germany should secure herself a position on the ground that she also, under normal conditions, can make influence felt at any time on the situation of things in China." See *ibid*, pp 173-174.

Regarding colonies, "in this respect, the German Social Democracy would have nothing to fear from the colonial policy of the German Empire. Just for this reason, the German Social Democracy can treat the question of these colonies without prejudice. There can be no question of serious reaction of colonial possessions on the political conditions of Germany". See *ibid*, p 177.

And finally, the following: "It is neither necessary that the occupation of tropical lands by Europeans should influence the natives in the enjoyment of their life, nor has it hitherto usually been the case. Moreover, only a conditional right of savages to the land occupied by them can be recognised. The higher civilisation can claim a higher right. Not the conquest but the cultivation of the land gives historical legal title to its use." See *ibid*, pp 178-179.

²¹ Santiago Carrillo, *op cit.*, p 106.

²² *Ibid*, p 107.

²³ *Ibid*, p 108.

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp 108-109.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p 109.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p 99-100.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p 101.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp 101-102.

³¹ *Ibid*, p 141.

³² *Ibid*, p 146.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p 154.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p 149. Carrillo paraphrases Bernstein, who writes: "Is there any sense, for example, in maintaining the phrase of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' at a time when in all possible places the representatives of Social Democracy have placed themselves practically in the areas of parliamentary work, have declared for the proportional representation of the people and for direct legislation-all of which is inconsistent with dictatorship." See Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, p 146.

"The whole practical activity of Social Democracy is directed towards creating circumstances and conditions which shall render possible and secure transition (free from countrywide outbursts) of the modern social order into a higher one. In this rests also, finally, the moral justification of socialist expropriation towards which they strive. But the 'dictatorship of the classes' belongs to a lower civilisation and apart from the question of expediency and practicability of the thing, it is only to be looked upon as a reversion, as political atavism. If the thought is aroused that the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society must necessarily be accomplished by means of the development of forms of an age which did not know at all, or only in quite an imperfect form, the present methods of the initiating and carrying out of laws and which was without the organ fit for the purpose, reaction will set in." *Ibid*, pp 146-147.

It should be remembered that all this chatter about progress and democracy did not prevent the Nazis from seizing power and murdering the best sons of the Ger-

man working class. And the Nazi dictatorship was smashed only by the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet. Bernstein at least had not the experience of Nazi rule when he allowed his revisionist imagination to run riot. But what can we say of his successors who return to his reasoning to convince others that things can be arranged peacefully under the State of the capitalist class and that the exploiting class will faithfully observe democratic norms? In any case it ought to show that Carrillo's reasoning for rejecting the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, rejecting revolution and putting his faith in the parliamentary path alone, is not original. It dates from fifty years back and produced disastrous consequences for the German working class.

³⁶ Santiago Carrillo, *op cit.*, p 149.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp 149-150.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p 150.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p 155.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p 156.

⁴² *Ibid*, p 157.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p 162.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p 164.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp 27-28.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p 43.

⁵² *Ibid*, p 44.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p 56.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p 55.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp 67-68.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p 52.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p 76.

⁶² Lenin, "Marxism and Revisionism," *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Vol 15.

⁶³ If reports appearing in Western European bourgeois papers are correct, Euro-communist leaders are out to establish their ideological bonafides with the European and American bourgeois world. *Der Spiegel* (the West German big bourgeois organ), of 12th December 1977, reported as follows: "Leading members of West European (Spanish, Italian) CPs have embarked upon a public relations foreign policy initiative. Carrillo was invited to speak at American Universities and seems to have done a great deal to popularise the image of an Iberian Socialism. He assured the American intellectuals that a communist can be a reasonable person who does not want to wage a war against America." In New Haven, he assured American industrialists that their interests would be protected. Only Gus Hall (American CP) seems to be critical. In order to speak in Yale, Carrillo had to ignore the strike posts of the Yale staff which was agitating for its own demands. The same paper reports an interview with Manuel Azecarte (Spain) and Lucio Lombardo-Radico (PCI) whose main points are as follows: There is need for a united and independent Europe which is free of both American and Soviet influence. (The interviewers give as examples of an active neutrality policy Yugoslavia

and Sweden.) Azecarte says that they do not wish to disturb the balance of forces and would ask for removal of US forces only if the Soviet Union reduced its troops in the USSR. Lucio Lambardo-Radico calls this a double strategy. To make Europe independent of blocs and also to overcome the bipolarity of the "leader States, USA, USSR", a worldwide pluralist structure of power is envisaged.

On ideological questions, the interviewed leaders state that Marxism-Leninism is outmoded. So is the dictatorship of the proletariat, Lenin's concept of democracy and a cadre party—all this is unacceptable to Azecarte. Marxism for us is scientific socialism and not atheistic philosophical materialism.

This seems to be in line with what Carrillo has written and this is the destiny of revisionism—rely on imperialist arms to guarantee the peace of Europe.

And naturally, with this ideology, an international outlook among Eurocommunists will be lacking, with each party taking a bourgeois-chauvinist position in opposition to the other on any issue. And bourgeois papers are having great fun at this display of Eurocommunist differences. An editorial of the *Times of India* dated 19th August writes: "To judge by the bitter polemics between the French and the Spanish Communists over Spain's admission into the European Economic Community, the so-called Eurocommunist phenomenon may well have become a thing of the past. The leader of the Spanish CP Mr Manuel Azecarte has gone on record to state that the French CP's campaign against Spain's membership of the EEC smacks of 'sensationalism' and 'parish-pump patriotism.' He has even claimed that the French comrades have used 'false and demagogic arguments', stooped to 'irrational depths' and played with the hand of 'old reactionary demons'. The French Communists have rightly described his criticism as being 'excessive' but they have been hard put to answering Mr Azecarte's main charge that they have opposed Spain's membership only with a view to enhancing their appeal in the eyes of a section of the French electorate."

It is not clear whether the *Times of India* editorial exaggerates the controversy. But it is clear that by its nature and class origin, revisionism is antagonistic to internationalism and in its search for collaboration with its own bourgeoisie, certainly adopts extreme bourgeois chauvinist positions. We have seen Bernstein justifying colonial conquests to protect German interests.

SUSAN RAM

Glimpses of Life in People's China

TRANSFORMING the basic conditions, and indeed the quality of life, of the masses of the people is a key principle of the socialist path of development. In fact, the whole aim of revolutionary socialist transformation is, through liberating productive forces from their man-made exploitative fetters, to create conditions for enhancing, step by step, the human factor—so that the new man becomes ever more the conscious master of nature and society. The connection between the general advance of the path and the material standards of living of various sections of the people is not at all an uncomplicated, one-to-one relationship, especially in a society where the historical consequences of backwardness are yet to be fully overcome. A system resting on a sensitive combination of the interests of the State, the collective and the individual must, of necessity, give priority to the first two; in a society where material abundance is still some way off, severe constraints will remain and sacrifices must be continually demanded and won. Nevertheless, if a sound general line is pursued over a reasonably long period, the superiority of the socialist system begins to yield results more and more directly in the daily life of the people. The basic reasons for this are obvious enough from a theoretical standpoint: public ownership of the means of production and the implementation of the principle, “to each

according to his work", constituting the two basic hallmarks of socialism, begin to make a real world of difference to the quality of life as compared with the old society.

It is this process of inspiring advance that we are able to observe in the contemporary experience of People's China—provided, of course, we free ourselves from the prejudices that abound and make live contact with the method which the Chinese revolutionaries, in their uncomplicated directness, are fond of calling "seeking the truth through facts".¹

The importance of paying attention to the quality of life of the people runs through the writings of the great revolutionary hero of modern Chinese history, Mao Tsetung, like a bright red thread.² He repeatedly emphasised that people, rather than weapons or machines or technique, were the decisive factor in the transformation of society, making the point that "of all things in the world, people are the most precious".³ In order to win and maintain the enthusiasm of the people for socialist transformation, attention, maintained Mao Tsetung, must be paid to steadily improving their livelihood from many sides. At the same time, he emphasised that no such improvement could take place without the development of production. This combination of raising the level of production and steadily improving the life of the masses of the people has proved, in the 29 years of New China's existence, to be an extraordinarily difficult and sensitive task, where one major lag or gap might give rise to serious imbalances.

In order to make an assessment of the quality of life of the Chinese people today, one has the advantage of referring to a growing body of literature on the development experience of China. This is made up both of Chinese official accounts and of the accounts and impressions of visiting foreigners, both generalists and specialists. This literature provides a good deal of detail about life patterns in contemporary China.⁴

A direct encounter with the lives of the Chinese people, through a visit to China, is a further help in developing an objective appreciation of this reality.

Organising Points

Whether one depends on the available published material or on one's own limited but direct observations, it is worthwhile using two organising points, or yardsticks, in attempting to assess the quality of life. In fact, both these yardsticks are widely used by the Chinese people themselves in the evaluations they make of their present conditions.

One organising point is to compare conditions today with those of the past, with the conditions experienced by the masses of the people in the old society before the Revolution. Many of the people whom a visitor encounters in China—particularly the greying middle-aged and the elderly, born well before 1949—can vividly recall those days. They

are encouraged to share their memories of the bitter past with the younger generation by talking with grandchildren and addressing school classes. One form of sharing these memories, followed particularly by the peasantry, is the "speak bitterness" meeting, at which people recount direct experiences and sufferings in the old society. Another form is the "recall bitterness" meal.⁵ Here, all the members of a community join together to eat wild herbs, tree bark, grasses and coarse non-staple grains—the foods with which peasants were forced to allay their hunger in the old landlord-dominated countryside. Such a meal allows everyone, young as well as old, a direct taste of the old conditions.

A second organising point is to evaluate living conditions in relation to the ambitious goals that have been set. How do present conditions appear when set against China's development goal of realising the four modernisations and a much better standard of living for the people by the end of the century? Such a comparison allows the people to identify shortcomings, lags and weaknesses. For example, cadres we spoke to in a commune in Kwangtung Province were far from euphoric about the level of development in their commune, especially when compared with that of Tachai. Although the quality of the people's lives had been transformed when compared with the old society, they thought that a great deal of effort and determination would be needed to realise the goals in production and in living standards set for the end of the century.

Keeping these two organising points in mind, let me provide a sample of the impressions we obtained of the quality of life in China during a 20-day visit in April and May of this year.⁶

Visual Impressions

Our journey, made by train, plane, and car, first took us from Peking to Tachai, the production brigade in Shansi Province which since 1964 has been the standard-bearer of China's socialist agriculture.⁷ After returning briefly to Peking, we travelled south to the eastern-central cities of Nanking, Soochow and Shanghai, then further south to Canton in China's tropical zone. We then returned to Peking and from there travelled to Shihchiachuang, a large and growing industrial centre which is the capital of Hopei Province.

During this journey of 20 days we were able to catch a glimpse of life and work in five people's communes, four major factories and some other smaller enterprises, three big universities and an agricultural research institute, one major hospital in an urban area, a commune hospital and two factory clinics, some schools and kindergartens, a couple of workers' residential areas, some exhibition halls, parks and historical landmarks, some sports activity and a few cultural performances. We were also able, on request, to interview a few whom we considered to be typical Chinese people, either at their place of work or in their own homes. That was the scope of our visit.

As we travelled through China, we collected, through simple observation, some visual impressions of the Chinese people in their richly varied activity. We observed, for example, the men and women, in roughly equal numbers, passing us on foot or cycle as we strolled along a tree-lined Peking street on a fresh spring morning. Pink-cheeked in the chill, these people of varied ages looked strong and healthy to us. They were on their way to work, and they moved briskly and purposefully, dressed in simple workclothes of blue-grey, brown and green. Although these clothes were modest and austere, we could see that they gave protection against the harsh climate. A young woman walking in front of us, in blue trousers and jacket, stubby plaits bouncing from beneath a white safety cap, suddenly, without the least show of inhibition, broke into a leisurely loping run. It seemed to us that she was taking in the sheer delight of exercised physical fitness, like the people practising calisthenics either singly or in groups in quiet places along the broad pavement.

High up on a terraced field in a production brigade not far from Tachai, we watched a team of peasants working: an elderly man, sturdy and warmly clad, guiding a ploughing ox by a complex of calls reminiscent of birdsong; following behind, young women in long trousers and padded jackets of pink, purple and green, stooping to spread compost or dribbling water from buckets carried on shoulder poles; the team absorbed in its collective effort.

In a quiet village area in a commune in tropical Kwangtung Province we came across an elderly peasant woman, white-haired, black-dressed, sitting in late afternoon sunlight, her back resting against a tree beyond which a river curled away lazily amid paddy-green fields. Playing around her were a dozen or so children, while in her arms she clasped a chubby baby. She spoke quietly to the children, giving them a timely call if they ventured too close to the river's edge. Her face, brown and deeply wrinkled, was tranquil and smiling.

Visiting a workers' residential area in suburban Shanghai, we suddenly encountered a group of schoolchildren on their way home for lunch. Boys and girls together, talking boisterously, several boys engaging in playful sparring, the children made a colourful sight in their sweaters of scarlet yellow and green. As they gathered round us, eager with questions, we saw faces that were flushed with running and talking, healthy young bodies that exuded energy and high spirits.

One evening towards the end of our visit we watched workers cycling homewards from the mills and factories of Shihchiachuang—a steady, continuous flow of peddling human forms. Among them we caught a glimpse of a cycle with a tiny attached side-car resting on its own miniature wheel. From inside peeped out a chubby baby's face, watching the passing scene in open-eyed astonishment as mother peddled them both home after (for baby) a day in the creche at his mother's factory

and (for mother) a day's work as a spindle-operator, perhaps, or a designer, or an engineer, or a factory manager.

These are just a few of the visual impressions gathered during a first visit to China. Many of these scenes, or elements of them, can of course be witnessed in a good many other poor and "developing" countries. But there is *an important difference*, and one which only the cynical visitor will fail to acknowledge or, at any rate, to notice. As you the visitor, travel through China, perhaps wandering the streets of big urban centres or driving through rural communes or relaxing in parks, gardens and other places of recreation—try as hard as you might, you cannot see any of the ugly features you have come to associate with poor and developing countries. You see no beggars, no one who looks destitute or malnourished, not an individual, much less an army of the unemployed. You see no ragged child labourers, no homeless families living on the streets, no abandoned old people, no one remotely resembling a prostitute. In short, the evidence of your eyes tells you that you are visiting a poor and developing country with a difference: a country that has been able to provide work and a guaranteed livelihood to the millions of its working people, that has been able to provide them with adequate food, clothing and shelter, and that has been able to achieve these goals in less than three decades.

In finding out more about these visible achievements in the quality of life of the people, we found particularly useful the interviews we had with a few typical Chinese industrial workers and peasants—whom we visited in their own homes.

Conditions of the Working Class

An insight into some features of the life of Chinese workers was obtained through detailed interviews with two working class families. One interview was with Yen Chung-gen and Yang Man-ching, a husband and wife both working at Number One Textile Mill, Shihchiachuang. The other was with a veteran chemical worker, Chao Hsing-pu, living with his family in suburban Shanghai.^a

The living accommodation of these two families was similar: a small flat in a four or five storey apartment block located in a planned residential area. In the case of the couple at Shihchiachuang, their accommodation was provided by their own factory, situated quite close by. Chao, on the other hand, lived in a separate residential area in accommodation provided by the Shanghai Municipality. In this New Residential Area lived about 60,000 people, mostly factory workers and their dependents. In the case of both families, the apartment blocks were arranged along or behind broad tree-lined streets, within easy reach of facilities like shops, schools, theatres, cinemas and recreation centres. We saw many similar residential areas in the towns and cities we visited in China. But our guides pointed out that it has not yet been possible to

rehouse all working class families in modern accommodation of this type. In fact there still exists significant overcrowding and housing judged to be substandard, particularly in the larger urban centres. Shih Chi, Responsible Comrade from the Office of Foreign Affairs of Shanghai Municipality, told us that since 1949, only 15 to 16 million square metres of floorspace had been added to the pre-Liberation total of 40 million square metres. This, he said, was far from enough. In fact, out of the 5.5 million population of Shanghai city proper, he estimated that about one million people were still living in housing judged to be seriously substandard.

Inside these new apartment blocks, living conditions are modest, crowded and austere, when judged by the standards of the advanced countries. Both flats we visited contained just two medium-sized rooms for living and sleeping, and a kitchen and a bathroom which were shared with another family. But the rooms were clean, cheerful, well-ventilated and quite comfortably furnished. The main room of the textile workers' flat, for example, was about 10 feet by 12 feet, with a large window at the far end through which the tops of trees were visible. The walls of the room were painted light grey-green, and a striplight hung from the centre of the ceiling. The room contained a number of pieces of varnished wooden furniture, a large wardrobe with a full-length mirror set in one door, two sideboards, tables, chairs and stools. Along the window wall stretched a steel-framed double bed spread with a floral sheet, the bedding neatly folded and stacked in one corner. Near to the bed stood a treadle sewing machine, and on a sideboard close by was a mains radio. A number of coloured vases, pictures and posters added brightness and simple ornamentation to the room.

The workers themselves, in their physical appearance, also conveyed this sense of modesty and simplicity in relation to possessions. Chao, a veteran worker with a combined family income of 210 Yuan (Rs 945) per month,⁹ wore typical working clothes: plain dark trousers, a blue jacket which buttoned up to the neck and beneath which the collar of a white cotton shirt was just visible, and a blue peaked cap. Yang Man-ching's outfit of black trousers, mushroom-brown jacket over a blue and white check shirt, white socks and black leather casual shoes was clearly practical for a woman industrial worker, and in it she looked neat, dignified and comfortable. Frugality in relation to dress and other personal possessions is an attitude which is encouraged in China. While not seen as a virtue in itself or as a requirement for all time, it is seen as being appropriate to the present level of development.¹⁰

Talking to these two working class families, we found that their links with the countryside were fresh and direct. Chao, for example, came from a poor peasant family in the old society. He came to Shanghai in 1948, aged only 14, seeking work in order to ease the acute poverty of his family. He found employment in a small bulb-manufa-

cturing workshop, but here he had to work for 14 or 15 hours a day, he received poor food and insufficient sleep, and was paid only two Yuan per month. Finally, driven away from this work by severe eye strain, he took up work as a cartpuller and continued in this up to the Revolution in 1949. "After Liberation", said Chao, using the term popularly used by the Chinese people to denote the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, "I was registered at the labour bureau which introduced me to some temporary work. Then I became a fulltime worker and after that my life was guaranteed". Yen Chung-gen, also from a poor peasant family, came to the city of Tientsin at the time of Liberation in 1949. He got an apprenticeship in a factory making shoes and caps where he worked for three years. After serving his apprenticeship, he began to work at the Number Two Textile Mill in Tientsin. His livelihood now guaranteed, he studied to improve his skill as a worker and also enrolled at a sparetime school to improve his level of education. In 1953, Yen was transferred to the Number One Textile Mill in Shihchiachuang.

Improvements in the Standard of Living

In recalling the past, both workers emphasised the big difference assured work and a guaranteed livelihood had made to their family fortunes. On this basis, they could, for the first time in their lives, look forward to the future with hope and confidence. But of course, as Chao pointed out, the conditions of life were still hard, work was demanding and wages were low. Chao recalled the experience of raising his family of two small children and a non-working wife on a monthly wage of 63 Yuan, in poor quality housing with a floor area of just nine square metres. What a difference it made, he remembered, when his wife was emancipated in terms of manual labour in 1958 and started working in a chemical plant. A further major advance in the living standards of the family came with their rehousing in the Tien Shan New Residential Area.¹¹

Both families reported a steady, step-by-step improvement in their living conditions since the early post-Liberation days. Their conditions today are indicated by the income and expenditure patterns which both families were able to provide in detail. In Chao's family, all four members were working: Chao himself, a seventh-grade worker near the top of China's eight-grade work system,¹² was drawing a monthly wage of 82 Yuan; his wife earned 60 Yuan; his 22-year-old daughter, working on a State farm, earned 32 Yuan; and his son, aged 21 and recently become a full-time worker after completing his apprenticeship, earned 36 Yuan. As both children contributed their earnings to the family fund, making only small deductions to cover work and pocket expenses, the total family income amounted to nearly 210 Yuan. The two textile workers, reported a very similar wage pattern. Yen, also a seventh-grade worker,

earned 82 Yuan monthly, while his wife Yang earned 68 Yuan. However as both their children were still attending school, the aggregate income of their family was lower, at 150 Yuan. As far as we could establish, the range of wages for industrial workers in China is from 35 Yuan for a first-grade worker up to between 90 and 100 Yuan for an eighth-grade worker, excluding bonus. The policy has been to pay low wages but to have many working in each family. There is now evidence of rethinking in relation to this policy, however. Although the payment of low wages has helped to prevent a wide wage spread, this policy may not have been the best possible under China's complex circumstances. Many skilled and hard-working workers went for many years without any increase in wages. Chao, for example, had no wage increase between 1963 and 1976. At the end of 1976, wage increases were announced for about 60 percent of workers, and this had certainly encountered an enthusiastic response from families such as Chao's.¹³

Given their levels of income, what were the expenditure patterns of these two families? Firstly, both families were paying low rents. Chao's monthly rent was 7.13 Yuan, in addition to which he spent one Yuan on electricity, 1.2 Yuan on running water and about two Yuan on gas. The working couple in Shihchiachuang, living in factory-provided accommodation, paid a monthly sum of 3.5 Yuan, and this covered the rent plus running water and electricity. They spent a further two Yuan on coal. A wide variety of sources agree that low rents are a characteristic of New China. Rents normally constitute between three and five per cent of basic income, rarely rising to a higher proportion.¹⁴

Both families estimated their food bill at around 15 Yuan per head per month. And, as they pointed out, this food bill had remained largely unchanged for a number of years, owing to the stability of food prices (and, indeed, of the prices of other essential commodities). Figures released in a recent Hsinhua News Bulletin¹⁵ give an idea of the remarkable price stability that China has maintained over the past quarter century. For example, one kilogram of standard rice cost 0.296 Yuan in 1952 and 0.304 Yuan in 1978. One kilogram of standard grade wheat flour cost 0.344 Yuan in 1952 and 0.37 Yuan in 1978. This stability in the prices of essential food items has been maintained despite the fact that the State has reportedly raised its purchasing prices for grains, oil-bearing and other crops on eight occasions. Sales prices have not been raised to the same degree, and consequent losses of commercial departments are subsidised by the State. Here it is instructive to recall the runaway inflation which swept China in the period immediately before the Revolution. In May 1949, the price of half a kilogram of rice in Shanghai stores is reported to have reached 1.92 million Yuan.¹⁶ An elderly man, infuriated by the skyrocketing prices, reportedly counted out, grain by grain, the half kilogram he had bought and calculated that each grain had cost him 100 Yuan.¹⁷ But today, as Yang Man-ching

told us, just a few cents will buy a working family plenty of fresh vegetables.

Low rents and stability in the prices of essential commodities allowed both families to place a significant proportion of their income in the bank every month. Chao estimated that his family was able to save between 40 and 50 Yuan out of each month's income. Yang also reported regular monthly savings, over and above the sum she and her husband always send to both sets of parents. She estimated the family's current aggregate savings, at between 500 and 600 Yuan. With these savings, both families have been able to purchase useful consumer items such as bicycles, watches, a radio and a treadle sewing machine. Savings are also utilised for rest and recreation. Chao's family for example, enjoyed a regular Sunday outing to a park or picnic spot. Normally, Chao told us, the excursion would include a meal out in a restaurant, and he estimated that his family spent around 10 Yuan a month on this form of recreation.

Besides a guaranteed livelihood and an adequate income, a further factor with an important bearing on the quality of life of these two working class families is the type of medical care they enjoy. Both reported that, as workers, they make use of a completely free medical service, while their family members pay half the normal fee—which, in any case, is already heavily subsidised by the State. The workers told us that they were given a regular annual physical check-up at the factory under the supervision of the trade union—an indication of the emphasis placed on prevention within the Chinese medical system. Chao was able to give us his estimation of what this standard of medical care has meant to the working people of China on the basis of his own experience:

At the end of 1976 I had a serious operation—actually part of my stomach was removed. Now, of course, I've fully recovered and am able to work a full shift. But my mother always says that if I had become ill before Liberation I would have died. That is because there was no labour insurance before Liberation and no medical care for us workers.

Social insurance in old age, as well as in times of illness, is a further right enjoyed by China's workers. Both families corroborated the data on retirement benefits and pensions published in official accounts: that the retirement age for men industrial workers is 60; that women engaged in physically demanding work can retire at 50; that all women workers can retire at 55; and that after retirement both men and women can draw between 70 and 80 percent of their basic pay as pension, according to length of service. Facilities such as the free medical service remain open to them after retirement.¹⁸

Yang Man-ching told us that the earlier retirement age for women is just one of a number of measures which extend to women workers special consideration and protection. Of basic importance to women

workers, she pointed out, was the fact that they were paid equal wages with men for equal work. But also important was the right to 56 days maternity leave on full pay, enjoyed by women workers throughout China. The reduction of workload during the final months of pregnancy as well as during the period of breastfeeding—again, with no reduction in pay—was a further right enjoyed by women workers. And Yang pointed to the range of facilities provided by the factory or the residential area which aim to reduce the burden of household and family duties. The provision of public dining halls, creches and kindergartens, as she pointed out, ensures that no mother has to remain tied to the home, immersed in domestic drudgery.¹⁸ It must be noted, however, that recent Chinese publications draw attention to the fact that domestic chores, especially cooking, demand too much time and effort from the common people, and that modern amenities, including time-saving household appliances and processed foods, fall far short of the actual requirements.²⁰ Despite such problems, it is clear that the great majority of Chinese women of working age have been released from the privacy of the home into socialised productive labour. It is also clear that this will have a growing significance for the quality of life of millions of Chinese families.

Cultural Development

However, it is not enough to assess the quality of life simply on the basis of the physical or material conditions of the people. Their cultural and spiritual development must also be taken into account. (By "spiritual" is meant all that which pertains to the realm of ideas—in other words, to human consciousness as opposed to material social being.) We were interested to hear what these two working class families had to tell us about this important dimension of their lives.

Both families attached a great deal of importance to education. Yang reported that both her teenaged children were attending the 10-year school run, free of charge, by her factory: her son, aged 15, was in the third year of junior middle school, and her 17 year old daughter was just about to graduate from senior middle school. Both parents were encouraging their daughter to take the all-China university entrance exams to be held in the summer. "Nowadays", commented the father, "the children are studying well. My son, for example, stayed up till 11 o'clock last night, reviewing his lessons for his examination. But in the past few years, in fact up to the end of 1976, children studying in schools could not get much knowledge. And when they came back from school, they spent the time just playing." Chao had had a similar experience with his two children: "During that period, the students would just go to the school in the morning, report for a while and then be back by nine o'clock. When the children wrote, we found that they were not good at writing or at reading. Then I was very much worried about the

future of China." This serious neglect and disruption of basic education, which seems to have characterised the 10-year period, 1966-1976, was linked by both families with a certain political line which is judged to be hostile to the many-sided construction of socialism. Following the overthrow of the political forces headed by the 'Gang of Four' in late 1976, and the clarification of priorities and development goals, a real improvement on the educational front could be seen, both families told us. Now students were working hard to make up for lost time. At the three universities and the research institute, as well as in the schools we visited, this point was very strongly emphasised to us by teachers, students and cadres: our education system has recently been a mess and we must make up for lost time. At the superbly equipped library of Tsinghua University, the Librarian, Hsih Kuo-hung, a 66 year old sociologist trained at Harvard University before the Revolution, guided us through the packed reading rooms and marvelled at the contrast this sight provided with the scene that prevailed up to two years ago. The same sight greeted us in the libraries of Peking and Fudan Universities. Book shops we visited in Shanghai were certainly overflowing. Stewart McBride, correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* visiting China a couple of months after we did, was obviously fascinated by the current expression of the Chinese people's thirst for knowledge:

During my visit here, reports McBride, the closest thing I've witnessed to a mass gathering is the queue outside a Shanghai bookstore. Thousands of people stand in line as a policeman chalks consecutive numbers on their sleeves. They are all waiting to purchase the new Chinese editions of previously banned Western classics, such as Mark Twain's 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer', Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice', Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe', Hugo's 'Les Miserables', Gorky's 'My Childhood' and a collection of Chekov's short stories... The commotion started when the party newspaper, the *People's Daily*, announced the release of some 35 titles, including many translated Western works popular before the Cultural Revolution... Hours after the newspaper notice appeared, a crowd began congregating before the New China Bookstore. They waited there through the night until the doors opened... The store allows each customer only one copy of each volume (at about one dollar a piece); if you want more, you have to go back to the end of the line... By noon, the shop is sold out... When it reopens, this time at 4 a m, the crowds again are waiting. By 11 a m, more than 7,000 customers have gone through the store; by early afternoon the new supply is exhausted and the bookstore again has to close...²¹

Impressive evidence has now been piled up on the obscurantist wave which seriously damaged, and at points devastated, China's massive educational system; and also impoverished the cultural life of millions of working families.²² The people we met spoke about the

experience with bitterness, combined with a sense of liberation. Chao, for example, recalled the monotony of cultural life in the past few years: "All we workers saw were so-called model operas—no other cultural performances were allowed." This negative experience has clearly made a deep impact on both families, and recent attempts to enrich this important dimension of life are much appreciated: "For example", said Chao, "the day before yesterday a very big meeting was held to mark the anniversary of the May 4 Movement. All the people in our street took part and there were many different performances and a film show. This would have been impossible one and a half years ago." Travelling through Chinese cities, we could see for ourselves the fresh range of cultural performances which are now being made available: traditional operas, modern ballets and dramas, films with both traditional and revolutionary themes, and acrobatic and gymnastic performances. "In fact", Chao observed, "these new films and operas which are now showing were one of the main reasons behind our decision to buy our son a bicycle. With his cycle, he can now go out to see these performances most conveniently."

QUALITY OF LIFE IN RURAL CHINA

China's working class has grown rapidly in the past 29 years—from an estimated four million before the Revolution to around 35 million today.²³ But China's total workforce today is about 450 million strong.²⁴ The great majority of these working people live and work in the rural areas, as members of the 50,000 People's Communes²⁵ which constitute the basic unit of State power in China's countryside. We were able to visit five of these communes, all of them relatively advanced ones. Our guides pointed out that some communes were more backward than these, with a correspondingly lower standard of living for their members. With this qualification in mind, let me present our impressions of the quality of life of China's peasants, again on the basis of interviews with two typical peasant families. One interview was with Fu Yu-chie, an elderly woman living in Ta Yuan People's Commune not far from Shihchiachuang in Hopei Province. The other was with Chiang Li-ho, a 46 year old man of Hua Tung People's Commune in the tropical province of Kwangtung.

Both peasants were able to give a clear portrait of the conditions under which they and their families had lived in the old society. "My family was a poor peasant family", said Fu Yu-chie. "In fact, we were practically landless as all we owned was three and a half cents of land—just enough to bury a corpse in. Both my father and my elder brother had to hire themselves out: my father hauled coal-barges for the landlords and the rich peasants, while my brother was a cartpuller. The nine members of my family lived in three small rooms. I can remember how squalid those conditions were: the roof leaked, so that when it was raining out-

side it was drizzling inside; we couldn't afford heating in the winter; and there weren't even enough quilts to go round." Chiang's memories were similar: he recalled how his poor peasant family used to till two *mu* (one third of an acre) of land rented from the landlord and were forced to hire themselves out for transportation and other work. The two tiny rooms in which his family lived were also rented from the landlord. Both peasants recalled the wretchedly poor diet, the constant battle against hunger of those days. Staple grain rarely found its way into the diet of Fu Yu-chie's family; they subsisted on sorghum, supplemented by wild herbs and grasses. And not even once a year, at Spring Festival, could they afford a little pork—the most popular meat in the Chinese diet. As for medical care, it was practically non-existent as far as the rural poor were concerned. "In just 10 days", reminisced Fu Yu-chie, "three members of my family perished: my grandfather, who'd been ailing for some time, my mother, of a difficult childbirth, and the baby, my little brother. The reason they died was because they couldn't afford to see a doctor." Educational opportunities were obviously non-existent: three generations in Fu Yu-chie's family received no learning at all, while Chiang Li-ho had just one year at school. These particular experiences, when seen against the large available literature on the countryside of old China, certainly seem typical of the life of the rural masses in the period before the Revolution.²⁶ How, as far as we could determine, had the quality of life of these two peasant families changed over the past 29 years?

First of all, it was clear that a very major change had taken place in the physical environment of both families. Both lived in single storey houses, constructed of brick and with tiled roofs, built around a courtyard. There were two or three fairly big rooms plus a separate kitchen. Inside, the whitewashed rooms were simply furnished: both homes contained a varnished wooden sideboard and an assortment of chairs, stools and tables; and in the bedrooms were beds of traditional Chinese design: a broad *kang*²⁷ spread with a coloured sheet in Fu-Yu-chie's northern home, and a wood-encased bed with curtains in the southern home of Chiang Li-ho. We could see similar houses in the neighbouring residential area and they appeared to be fairly typical of living conditions in these particular communes.

Earnings and Consumption Standards

Both peasants reported that their family income was more than sufficient to cover the basic necessities of life. In Fu Yu-chie's family, all four members were working: her husband, her son and she herself worked as members of a production brigade while her daughter-in-law worked in a wines and spirits factory. Last year the three of them working in agriculture worked to the extent of more than 9,000 work-points and received 784 Yuan cash money at the end of the year. Work-

points are units in the method of distribution to commune members and the value of 10 workpoints, or the average working day, may be said to express the level of development of production and also, roughly, the living standard of the people. A running debate has been conducted in these people's communes on the justice as well as the scientific rationale involved in the actual allocation of workpoints. We found that the value of 10 workpoints could vary quite considerably, even over the small part of the country we were able to visit. For example, Tachai had the highest value among the brigades we visited, with the value of 10 workpoints at 1.75 Yuan. The neighbouring, less developed brigades of Nan Nao and Shi Ping had levels of 1.2 Yuan and 1.3 Yuan respectively. But Machiao and Hua Tung People's Communes, favoured with exceptionally fine natural conditions as well as the advantage of mechanisation, could achieve only 0.90 Yuan and 0.83 Yuan respectively—which cadres attributed to efforts which fell far short of those of Tachai. But Tung Gu-chan, the brigade to which Fu Yu-chie and her family belong, had already attained a level of 1.22 Yuan for 10 workpoints.

The cash payment of 784 Yuan paid to Fu Yu-chie's family at the end of last year represented a substantial sum, since the amount the family had spent on foodgrain and grain processing had been deducted beforehand. In fact, over the years her family had been able to make substantial savings. "Even though we spent between 700 and 800 Yuan on my son's wedding recently", she told us, "we still have about 1,300 Yuan in the bank." Useful consumer items have also been purchased: there were three cycles in the family and both her son and her daughter-in-law owned wristwatches.

Chiang's family was a substantially larger one, with no fewer than eight members: Chiang himself, his wife, a son, four daughters and a daughter-in-law. Two of the daughters were still studying at school; so the family had a total of six wage-earners. Last year, the family's cash income, again after the deduction of money for foodgrain and processing, was 1,005 Yuan. This family, too, had been able to make substantial savings. For example, in 1973 the family was able to spend more than 2,000 Yuan on building their present home. Purchases of consumer items had also been made: we could see three cycles parked in the courtyard and one of Chiang's daughters was working at a shiny new treadle sewing machine. The ability of peasant families to purchase such items indicates the gradual narrowing of the gap between the relative prices of agricultural and industrial products, as a result of conscious State policy. A recent official report estimates that the same amount of farm produce now provides income to buy 70 percent more manufactured goods than it did in 1952.²⁸ For example, the report stated, whereas a peasant could buy 6.3 metres of white cloth for the sale of 50 kilograms of rice in 1952, he could now buy 12.3 metres.²⁹

Health and Education

In their physical appearance, these families looked healthy and were adequately if simply dressed. Improved health they ascribed in large part to a better diet. Fu Yu-chie was proud to tell us that her family eats three square meals, based on wheat or rice, every day. Fresh fruit, grown extensively in her production brigade, was an attractive addition to the family menu: "At the fruit harvesting season, everyone here can get 35 kilograms of fruit—apples, pears, peaches—for just 50 cents," she reported. Pork was now quite a regular meal item, and her family in fact raises two pigs every year as a private side-line source of income. One pig is sold to the State and the other consumed by the family.

The other major factor which, these families reported, had made a world of difference to the standard of health in the rural areas was the cooperative medical service. China's system of people's medicine gives the first priority to prevention, functions with the aid of more than one million barefoot doctors and several million healthworkers and midwives who never cease to participate in productive work, and, above all, puts the stress on rural areas.⁵⁰ "Nowadays", noted Fu Yu-chie, "you find that fewer people get ill to start with. And if you *do* get ill, you don't have to worry as you did in the old days. In this commune, for example, we have a completely free medical service. This has replaced the old cooperative service, for which we used to make a nominal payment." Chiang's commune operates a cooperative medical service to which members pay two Yuan each year. And in Machiao Commune near Shanghai, the charge was one Yuan per year, plus a 10 cent registration fee for a first visit to the commune hospital. Thereafter all the treatment was free.

These families had experienced a transformation not only in their material conditions but also in their intellectual and spiritual life. For Chiang Li-ho, the opening of educational opportunities to his children was one of the most precious gains of the new society. Two of his daughters had already graduated from junior middle school. His son had opted to continue his education further and had graduated from senior middle school. His third daughter was currently studying in senior middle school and his youngest daughter was attending primary school. "Before Liberation we could not afford to study in schools. Now all school-aged children can study in school. It's a great change—a striking contrast between the old society and the new society" was how Chiang summed up his feelings.

Outlook on Life

We were interested to find out more about the outlook on life of these peasant families. Here, it was particularly instructive to hear the

peasants explain, in their own words, the reasons for the big changes that had taken place in their lives. Both identified the Revolution in 1949 as the turning point in their family fortunes. Chiang's family, for example, received 10 *mu* (one and two thirds of an acre) of land and two new rooms as their share after Land Reform. Although this made a world of difference, the problems of poor peasant families, as Chiang told us, were not solved overnight:

Though we got land, we didn't have enough farming tools, and because of this our yields were still quite low. So in 1954 we set up a Mutual Aid Team, composed of seven or eight households. In this team we helped one another. In 1955, we established an elementary cooperative and in 1956 an advanced cooperative. I found that at each of these stages, living standards improved noticeably. But the real, consolidated advance in our way of life came after the setting up of our People's Commune in 1958.

Fu Yu-chie, in her account, also emphasised the importance of collective effort in bringing about the transformation in the countryside. She recalled how, in the past, this part of rural Hopei was a dry, sandy area, at the mercy of summer flash floods that would wash everything away. But after the Revolution, and the development first of cooperative then collective agriculture, these conditions had become transformed. The commune members built reservoirs, planted trees to act as wind-breaks and developed scientific farming. "Now", said Fu Yu-chie with pride, "we can ensure all-round development—farming, forestry, sideline occupations, animal husbandry and fisheries. And that means a stable, secure livelihood for all our commune members."

These views, and the outlook on life which they revealed, struck us as deeply significant. Here were two peasants speaking—both of them born into the old Chinese peasantry that was, by all accounts, as ground down by poverty, ignorance and superstition as the peasantries of other backward societies. A space of only 29 years separated them from that old society and its values, built up over many centuries. Now, speaking to us, these peasants conveyed a sense of purposefulness, of direction over their own lives. It was clear that they did not feel themselves to be at the mercy of any blind, irrational forces. They looked upon the big changes which had taken place as the result not of any miracle but of correct revolutionary leadership and determined collective effort to which they had willingly and consciously contributed. This fresh new outlook, which we encountered among other peasants we spoke to during our visit, is a factor which must be paid serious attention in any assessment of the quality of life in People's China.

Expressed in simple, down-to-earth language, in words that clearly came straight from the heart, this was the picture that these few, and so far as we could tell, typical Chinese working families gave us of the changes that have taken place in their lives. Coming from the lowest

of the low in old China, their memories of that bitter past fresh and direct, these families spoke of a transformation that was in fact an over-turning of their conditions of existence. In the old society, such families as these led lives that were desperate struggles for survival; several thousands of families such as Chao's or Fu Yu-chie's perished in the effort. These were the people whom Mao Tsetung once graphically described, even after taking into account their great history, as "poor and blank." But now, as they talked with us, these working people of new China seemed to convey a sense of rootedness, a sense of control over their own present and future. They spoke of the new society as one which belonged to *them*, the working people. In the balance, they saw in the priorities, in the unified State plans, in the practice of development being followed, a central position given to *their* conditions, *their* material and spiritual needs, and *their* dreams. This emphasis on the quality of life of the working people provides the key insight into why China is a poor and developing country with a *difference*. The path of development chosen made it its priority to transform the lives of the masses of the people at the very outset—by guaranteeing work and basic livelihood, by striving in a planned way to provide food, clothing and shelter to the whole people, by extending to them basic medical care and education. China today is no utopia; it is not a society of material abundance and certainly not what would be recognised in the theory of scientific socialism as a completely modern socialist society. There remain many lags in the effort, specific shortages and weaknesses that will have to be overcome. The Chinese people have to work very hard in order to be able to lead simple, austere lives. But men and women like Yen Chung-gen, Chao Hsing-pu, Yang Man-ching, Fu Yu-chie and Chiang Li-ho can now hold their heads high. If, during the present, they already live and work as masters of the means of production and of their ancient society—jointly owning the fruits of labour instead of working to fatten the parasites of an exploitative order—they can also look forward to a future that is more secure, more plentiful and more happy, a future that is sensitively and profoundly committed to raising the quality of their life and that of their children and grandchildren.

(This is based on a paper presented by the writer at a seminar on "The Chinese Development Pattern" at the Madras Institute of Development Studies in August 1978.)

- ¹ See Mao Tsetung, "On New Democracy" (1940), in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975, p 339.
- ² See "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" (1927), "Pay Attention to Economic Work" (1933), "Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work" (1934), "Win the Masses in their Millions for the Anti-Japanese National United Front" (1937), in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol I, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975; "For the Mobilisation of all the Nation's Forces for Victory in the War of Resistance"

(1937), "Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan" (1938), "On Protracted War" (1938), "The Orientation of the Youth Movement" (1939), "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" (1939), "In Memory of Norman Bethune" (1939), "On New Democracy" (1940), in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* Vol II, Foreign Languages Press, Peking; "Preface and Postscript to Rural Surveys" (1941), "Rectify the Party's Style of Work" (1942), "Talks at the Yen'an Forum on Literature and Art" (1942), "Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership" (1943), "Spread the Campaign to Reduce Rent, Increase Production and Support the Government and cherish the People in the Base Areas" (1943), "Get Organised!" (1943), "The United Front in Cultural Work" (1944), "We Must Learn to Do Economic Work" (1945), "On Coalition Government" (1945), "On Production by the Army for its Own Support and on the Importance of the Great Movements for Rectification and for Production" (1945 in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* III, Foreign Languages Press, Peking; "The Situation and our Policy after the Victory in the War of Resistance against Japan" (1945), "Rent Reduction and Production are two Important Matters for the Defence of the Liberated Areas" (1945), "Policy for Work in the Liberated Areas for 1946" (1945), "Greet New High Tide of the Chinese Revolution" (1947), "The Chiang Kai-shek Government is Besieged by the Whole People" (1947), "Manifesto of the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army" (1947), "On the Re-issue of the Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points for Attention—Instruction of the General Headquarters of the Chinese People's Liberation Army" (1947), "On some Important Problems of the Party's Present Policy" (1948), "Essential Points in Land Reform in the New Liberated Areas" (1948), "Tactical Problems of Rural Work in the New Liberated Areas" (1948), "Methods of Work of Party Committees" (1949), "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" (1949), "The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History" (1949), in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* Vol IV, Foreign Languages Press, Peking; and "The Chinese People have Stood Up" (1949), "Long Live the Great Unity of the Chinese People" (1949), "Be a True Revolutionary" (1950), "Main Points of the Resolution Adopted at the Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" (1951), "The Party's Mass Line Must be Followed in Suppressing Counter-Revolutionaries" (1951), "Great Victories in Three Mass Movements" (1951), "Take Mutual Aid Cooperation in Agriculture as a Major Task" (1951), "Combat Bureaucracy, Commandism and Violations of the Law and of Discipline" (1953), "Solve the Problem of the 'Five Excesses'" (1953), "Two Talks on Mutual Aid and Cooperation in Agriculture", (1955) "Rely on Party and League Members and Poor and Lower-Middle Peasants in the Cooperative Transformation of Agriculture" (1955), "On the Cooperative Transformation of Agriculture" (1955), "Preface to Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside" (1955), "Editor's Notes from Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside" (1955), "On the Ten Major Relationships" (1956), "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" (1957), "Persevere in Plain Living and Hard Struggle, Maintain Close Ties with the Masses" (1957), "Be Activists in Promoting the Revolution" (1957), and "Have Firm Faith in the Majority of the People" (1957) in *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* Vol V, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, "Talk at Enlarged Working Conference Convened by Central Committee of Communist Party of China" (1962), *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, July 1, 1978. This list is by no means exhaustive, but brings out the remarkable continuity of the theme of paying all-sided attention to improving the people's lives in the works of Mao Tsetung that have been published so far.

³ "The Bankruptcy of the Idealist Conception of History" (1949), *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol IV, p 454; "On Protracted War" (1938), *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung* Vol II, p 143.

- ⁴ See, for example, Chu Li and Tien Chieh-yun, *Inside a People's Commune*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1975; Kao Yu-pao and others, *My Hometown-Six Reportage Articles*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1974; Wilfrid Burchett with Rewi Alley, *China: The Quality of Life*, Penguin Books, London, 1976; Ruth Sidel, *Families of Fengsheng*, Penguin Books, London, 1974; Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, *Daily Life in Revolutionary China*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972; Janet Goldwasser and Stuart Dowty, *Huan-Ying: Workers' China*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1975; David Selbourne, *An Eye to China*, Black Liberator Press, New York, 1975; Robert and Stephanie Reford, "Homes Show Way of Living", *The Hindu Weekly Magazine*, August 20, 1978, p VII.
- ⁵ Both these forms were widely popularised during the Cultural Revolution. The "Speak bitterness" meeting had earlier been used during the course of the Chinese Revolution in the 1930s and 1940s. For an example of the use of these forms today, see Wen Yin and Liang Hua, *Tachai: the Red Banner*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977, p 137.
- ⁶ The visit was made by the writer and her husband, N Ram, Associate Editor of *The Hindu*. The details were worked out with the help of the Information Department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of the People's Republic of China.
- ⁷ For background material on Tachai, see Wen Yin and Liang Hua, *op cit*; Neville Maxwell, "Learning from Tachai" in *World Development*, Vol 3, Nos 7-8, July-August, 1975; (also published as No 78E in the *Oxford Institute of Commonwealth Studies* reprinted series.)
- ⁸ The interview with Chao Hsing-pu has already been reported in some detail. See N Ram, "Portraits of the Chinese People: One of Thirty-five Million Workers," *The Hindu Weekly Magazine*, June 25, 1978.
- ⁹ One Yuan is roughly equivalent to Rupees 4.5.
- ¹⁰ Claudia Francke, a German student who studied at Peking University between 1974 and 1976, was able to observe this practice of frugality at first hand. Describing the life of her room mate at the Languages Institute, she reports, "Neatly folded and covered in plastic, Rui-qui's bedclothes were piled Chinese fashion at the foot of her bed. On the shelves were soap-dish, toothbrush and mug, a wash bowl and some books. To my surprise Rui-qui had hardly any clothes and had therefore moved her wardrobe outside so that the little room looked somewhat larger...Even in comparison with other Chinese girls, Rui-qui had fewer things in our room. So the two sides represented two different worlds: on my side were piled up many unnecessary things which I had accumulated; her side was plain and simple, just the necessities." See Claudia Francke, "A German Student in China" *China Now*, No 77, March-April, 1978, p 35.
- ¹¹ Situated in western Shanghai the Tien Shan New Residential Area was begun in 1952, on land that had previously been under cultivation. Today, it contains some 15,000 households, making up a population of about 60,000. The majority of the residents work in nearby factories. Tien Shan contains four middle schools (or secondary schools), eight primary schools, 10 kindergartens, one hospital and 13 cooperative medical service stations, a post office, bank, cinema, swimming pool, park, market and a variety of shops. For a detailed account of China's urban neighbourhoods, see Ruth Sidel, *op cit*.
- ¹² The general structure of wages for workers in China is based on a centralised eight-grade system that allows for limited variations to suit specific local conditions. The basic system is characterised in authoritative Chinese accounts as primarily on a time-rate basis supplemented by piecework pay and bonuses; and to be opposed to both "simplistic equalitarianism and too wide a wage spread." See *People's Daily* article cited in a *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, May 9, 1978. The eight-grade wage system has been firmly defended over more than two decades as according

with the principle, "to each according to his work", which characterises the development of the socialist economy at this stage.

- ¹³ This meant that with the upward revision, which came into effect on October 1, 1977, those who benefitted got about 10 percent more than their original pay. Forty-six per cent of workers had their wages raised by one grade on the present scale, while the remaining had an upward adjustment. Despite this, it is recognised in Party and State publications that some imperfections and irrationalities exist in the wage system that need to be eliminated through wage reform after summing up the results of investigation throughout the country. For recent explanations of the rationale behind the eight-grade wage system, as well as behind the increases, see *Peking Review*, May 5, 1978, pp 13-14, p 21, and *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, May 9, 1978, pp 13-14.
- ¹⁴ Numerous Chinese and foreign accounts offer this estimate. See, for example, Peng Kuang-hsi, *Why China Has No Inflation*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1976, pp 10-11.
- ¹⁵ "China's Price Policy Explained" *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, July 24, 1978, pp 14-15.
- ¹⁶ Peng Kuang-hsi, *op cit.*, p 19.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 19.
- ¹⁸ The rights of the Chinese worker in old age are enshrined in Article 50 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China: "Working people have the right to material assistance in old age, and in case of illness or disability. To ensure that working people enjoy this right, the state gradually expands social assistance, public health services, co-operative medical services, and other services." See *Documents of the First Session of the Fifth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1978, p 168.
- ¹⁹ For more on the position of women in China, see *New women in New China*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking 1972, Ruth Sidel, *Women and Child Care in China*, Penguin Books Inc, New York, 1976; the sources listed in Note 4.
- ²⁰ For example, see *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, June 17, 1978, p 20.
- ²¹ Stewart Dill McBride, third of his three articles on China, circulated by the Christian Science Monitor News Service(undated). Mc Bride was one of a party of a dozen American journalists who toured China in the summer of 1978.
- ²² Source material on this obscurantist wave includes: interviews and discussions we had during our visit with academicians, students and cadres at Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, the Agricultural Academy of Kwangtung Province, and Number Nine Middle School, Soochow; Hua Kuo-feng, "Unite and Strive to Build a Modern, Powerful Socialist Country!"—Report on the Work of the Government delivered at the First Session of the Fifth National Congress on February 26, 1978, *Documents*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1978, pp 77-84; Chi Hsin, *The Case of the Gang of Four*, Cosmos Books Ltd, Hong Kong, 1977; Teng Hsiao-ping, Speech at the National Educational Work Conference on April 22, 1978, published in *Peking Review*, May 5, 1978.
- ²³ Mao Tsetung, in "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party", 1939, estimated that modern industrial workers in China (excluding the large number in small-scale industries and handicrafts and urban shops) numbered 2.5 million to 3 million. See *Selected Works of Mao Tsetung*, Vol II, p 324. Premier Chou En-lai revealed, in 1971, that the industrial work force (including workers in rural industries) had risen to 30 millions. See *Quarterly Economic Review of China, Hong Kong and North Korea: Annual Supplement 1977*, Economist Intelligence Unit, London, 1977, p 9.
- ²⁴ This is based on an estimate made by the Economist Intelligence Unit, *op cit.*
- ²⁵ This general estimate is accepted by the Economist Intelligence Unit, *op cit.*, p 11. See also John G Gurley, *China's Economy and the Maoist Strategy*, Monthly Review Press, New York, p 216.

- ²⁶ See, for example : Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, Penguin Books, London; 1973; Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1970; William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1966.
- ²⁷ A *kang* is a raised platform made of mud bricks, constructed so that the flue from a fire runs under it and warms it.
- ²⁸ "China's Price Policy Explained", *Hsinhua News Bulletin*, July 24, 1978, pp 14-15. See also the discussion of this issue by John Gurley, *op cit.*, especially pp 230-263
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ Apart from specialist reports and evaluations by periodically visiting teams of foreign medical men, see: J S Horn, 'Away With All Pests...: An English Surgeon in People's China', Paul Hamlyn, London, 1969; *Creating a New Chinese Medicine and Pharmacology*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1977; Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, *op cit.*, "Medicine in China" Ch 10; Wilfrid Burchett with Rewi Alley, *op cit.* "China's Health" Ch 14.

N K CHANDRA

*Industrialization and the Left Movement:
On Several Questions of Strategy in West Bengal*

PART TWO

IT IS universally recognized today that only labour intensive small-scale industries, rural and urban, can generate significant employment in countries like India. This awareness has existed for quite some time. A number of policies to promote small industries have also been in force. Yet most small establishments that survive do so against the most overwhelming odds, fighting against the superior power of big business. The basic reason for the yawning gap between official pronouncements and day-to-day practice is a lack of political courage and vision. When the chips are down, neither the Congress nor the Janata party can afford to come down decisively in favour of the small sector.

The malaise afflicting small industries has been diagnosed time and again over the past few decades. They do not get adequate institutional finance obliging them to turn to usurious mahajans, and they cannot find outlets for their wares. To rectify the situation vested interests would have to be confronted. When raw materials go scarce, the big industries generally have a priority claim and at times they resell materials at a high premium on the black market. Banks in general do not find it profitable to approach a myriad of small customers. Our banking tradition inherited from the British acts as a big handicap; bankers prefer to advance money to clients with large assets. On the

marketing side the 'international demonstration effect', that is, the transmission of Western consumption styles, combined with the aggressive sales strategy of big industries has made small industry products 'outmoded' in the eyes of most consumers. Thanks to high pressure campaigns through different advertising media 'quality' is almost universally associated with goods manufactured by 'modern' industry.

Despite these tremendous handicaps small industries have not caved in entirely. Various public sector agencies have come in to protect and promote small industries. The Left Front government can make a detailed analysis of the successes and failures with a view to extending the area of success to the utmost. And this implies that state government organs have to take on more and more of an 'entrepreneurial' role which can effectively counter the enormous resources of big business.

Khadi and Handloom

Let us first note briefly some of the 'success stories'. Under the recent 'Janata Sari' scheme the Apex Cooperative Societies in different states advance cotton yarn to the member cooperative societies, pay the agreed labour costs and a subsidy of about Rs 5 per sari, and purchase the entire amount to be sold through its network at a retail price of Rs 10 to Rs 12 a piece. In West Bengal one lakh pieces were turned out in August 1977 and the number was expected to be twice as many by November of the same year.¹ The target was reached by mid-1978, if not earlier. For India as a whole the production of Janata cloth is expected to rise from 82 to 200 million metres between 1977-78 and 1978-79.² West Bengal needs to step up her monthly production rate to five lakh pieces in order to maintain her share in the total. On the whole, the handloom industry in West Bengal is not making as much progress as in certain other states. Sometime back it was reported that under the concessional refinance scheme (at the rather low interest rate of 7.5 percent of the Reserve Bank of India), as much as Rs 20 crores were utilized by the Tamil Nadu weavers as against a mere Rs 45 lakhs by the West Bengal weavers. However, one nationalized bank advanced Rs 2.5 crores to the weavers in West Bengal through their cooperatives.³ Next, the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has been supporting a number of village industries, including khadi, for more than two decades. Thus in the case of khadi the KVIC supplies raw cotton and undertakes to purchase finished cloth which is often sold through its network of shops.⁴ Subsidies are given in various forms and at varying rates depending on the product.⁵ Subsidies on the capital costs of a gobar gas plant, for example, may go up to 75 percent, if it is meant for the poorer sections of the rural community. In 1977-78 the Centre took up a Rs 10 crore development plan for seven village industries, namely, khadi, leather, pottery, carpentry, blacksmithy, soap and ghani oil, to be implemented through the KVIC. It appears, however, that in

West Bengal the KVIC is not as active as in many other states. Only a fraction of khadi sold here is produced in this state.⁶

It is important to dwell on the issue of khadi and handloom. For, in terms of employment potential no other industry can match these. The main drawback here is the fact that cotton is not grown in the Eastern region and the yarn, too, comes from the South and the West. For a long time successive governments in West Bengal have been clamouring for an equalization of freight (as in the case of coal and steel) throughout India so that raw cotton and yarn would be available here at the same price as in the main producing areas. But the Centre, has not implemented the equalizations. On the other hand, the KVIC, it appears, has been ensuring a uniform price of raw cotton throughout the country. Could it not be persuaded to do so on a much wider scale? Could not the 'Janata Sari' scheme be propagated to a much larger extent and dhotis be included as well? One major prerequisite would be the organization of khadi and handloom workers into effective cooperatives, and not mere show-windows masterminded by mahajans. The primary responsibility in this domain must be borne by the left parties; if the bureaucracy is ordered to locate cooperatives, it is most likely that too many spurious ones will thrive with official blessings.

Generally speaking, the growth of small industries depends vitally on the extent to which independent (vis-a-vis big business and big traders) associations or cooperatives of direct producers can be fostered. Sporadically, the left parties have, indeed, made inroads into these areas, but the gap between the actual and the potential is enormous. Regarding the small industrial capitalists, as we noted in an earlier section, the left parties should support them vis-a-vis big business; on the other hand, small capitalist entrepreneurs need not be protected against competition from the direct producers' cooperatives. Unless such priorities are spelled out in clear terms with modifications, if necessary, confusion may arise at various levels.

The state government can provide encouragement in various ways to small industries. We have already indicated how Central Government institutions like the KVIC can be prodded on to get more actively involved in this state. There may also exist other agencies which we are not aware of. Since all the funds as well as overall management problems are looked after by centrally financed institutions, the state government needs only to use its own political weight. In the paragraphs below we shall expand on problems of industries not covered by these schemes.

Need for Sectoral Agencies

There already exists a multiplicity of departments and agencies of the state government to assist small industries. By and large these agencies might secure various licenses and quotas for units registered

under them, but are not equipped to play any role in implementing the programmes. Their link with the actual industries is rather casual and occasional. Many small units exist on paper only, get their share of scarce materials, and then sell it on the black market, while genuine producers suffer; many units are again just *benami* concerns belonging to big business. Since there are no regular checks, corruption, under the present circumstances, thrives.

To get out of the vicious circle the state government needs to create sectoral agencies (SA) somewhat along the lines of the KVIC. Each SA should look into the totality of problems of small industrial units producing a fairly narrow range of goods. The SA has to store the necessary raw materials, supply it to the units under it, ensure that the required output is produced according to quality specifications, and arrange to find buyers for the goods. In other words, the SA must be prepared to take up the role of the 'putting out' capitalist without, of course, fleecing the producers as the latter is wont to.

Backed by the state government, the SAs can obtain supplies of many essential raw materials directly from other public sector undertakings like the Steel Authorities of India Ltd, Coal India Ltd, the State Trading Corporation, and so on; if necessary, the centrally established priorities for allocating scarce materials may be changed in favour of the small sector through the active intervention of the SAs. Thus the raw material expenses for small units can be drastically reduced. Many of these buy steel sheets, for instance, at about Rs 8 per kg when the official price is barely Rs 2. It may be much worse for imported items. Further, the SAs through their bulk purchases, can force private sector companies to sell their output at more competitive prices than individual small buyers. Further, in several cases, for example the spinning mills under government management, the output of yarn may be supplied directly to handlooms eliminating all private trade in the process.

Secondly, the SAs could intervene with the nationalized and cooperative banks to ensure adequate and timely finances for the units under them. If the latter are organized in cooperatives or associations, and if the SAs could vouch for their performance, the financial institutions are likely to give funds with greater alacrity. The SAs might also succeed in ensuring much higher loan finance for every rupee of own capital put up by the producer; in current practice big industrialists get away with much better terms than the small ones. Further, reduction in interest rates to about five percent (as in the case of export finance) may also be attempted.

On the marketing side SAs could begin by channelling as far as possible all purchases made by the state government to the small units under them. The total of such purchases runs into several hundred crores of rupees per annum. Moreover, state government loans are used by private individuals to buy various goods; credits can be tied to

purchases through the SAs. Of course, the small industries cannot supply everything that the government or the borrowers need; but a very substantial part can come from them. Already policies exist to favour the small industries who are also eligible for a price advantage of 10-15 percent. There is no mechanism, however, to implement them. A centralized purchasing agency for the state government, somewhat along the lines of the DGS and D under the Centre, and acting in close liaison with the SAs, may be necessary. Lastly, the SAs can penetrate into areas now under private trade, provided quality, price and other trade terms are competitive.

Differential Taxation

The fiscal tools in the hands of the state government are by no means inconsiderable. Sales tax, octroi and excise are already being levied at different rates on different goods in conformity with overall objectives. If promotion of small industries (and the consequent curtailment of big industry) is elevated to the top rank, then a great deal can be achieved. There is no legal bar to raising the sales tax on, say, mill-made fabrics and garments thereof to 25 to 30 percent while that on handlooms and khadi can be kept at zero. For a number of drugs the transnationals, Indian monopoly firms and even public sector companies charge several times more than small private firms; in such cases a high tax on the former would greatly help the latter. (We may note in parentheses that the public sector plants in many cases have low capacity utilization resulting in high unit costs; they are afraid to reduce the prices drastically for it might lead to greater losses. A Lok Sabha committee suspected an implicit collusion between them and big business).⁷

Concretely, such differential taxes may be imposed on all branded drugs listed in Appendix II of the Hathi Committee's report on the Drugs and Pharmaceutical Industry for which perfect substitutes in generic names are available; the 13 drugs listed are among the fastest-selling items and account for a very large turnover.⁸ This recommendation of the Hathi Committee has been put in cold storage by the Centre, and West Bengal can take a commendable lead in this regard. A much more thorough-going effort in replacing branded drugs by generic-name ones was undertaken by the Sri Lanka State Pharmaceutical Corporation reducing the import bill drastically.⁹ There is also a good deal of ready information available with the central drug purchasing agency of the West Bengal government; wherever good substitutes for branded drugs of big companies exist, differential taxes may be used to weed out the latter and promote small manufacturers.

The list of products where small industries could reduce the existing market shares of big business is very large. Apart from drugs and clothing, other well-known items are paper, crockery, ceramics, glass, cosmetics, soaps, toiletries, electric bulbs, radios, phonograms,

pumps, small transformers, agricultural tools and implements and many others. One area with enormous employment potential is the dehusking of rice. Rice-mills and husking machines have over the decades driven out of job countless women who worked on the foot-operated *dhenkis*. Why should one not revive the *dhenki* on a mammoth scale? With the improved type of Assam *dhenki* requiring only one person to operate it¹⁰, the costs should at worst be marginally above those of husking or rice mills. Nutritionally rice from *dhenkis* is far superior, too. A tax on rice from the mills could easily make *dhenkis* more competitive. The Food Corporation of India, too, may be asked to get its paddy dehusked by *dhenki*-operating women's cooperatives that could be set up at different places.

Another sphere of extremely wide significance is that of housing which literally affects millions. The house building programme of the state government is considerable, though highly inadequate in terms of needs; new ideas sponsored by the government are likely to have repercussions in private building which is by far the most important today. Low-cost housing as a practical proposition has been demonstrated effectively by various persons and agencies, the foremost proponent being the well-known British architect, L W Baker, who has been living in Kerala for the last few decades. The novelty lies in adapting Kerala's traditional styles to modern conditions. As a result the costs come down sharply as compared to contemporary stereotypes which use far too much of cement, steel, and so on. On a crude approximation, the costs should be about 40 percent lower as against the rates approved by the Public Works Department (PWD). For a brick house with a latrine, tiled roof and a plinth area of 250 sq ft the costs in 1972-73 were put at a meagre Rs 750-1000. Baker's method consists in using lime-surkhi mix in lieu of cement-sand for mortar, reducing plastering drastically, eliminating concrete lintels by brick arches, the use of treated country wood (jack-wood or *anjali* which are plentiful in Kerala) in lieu of sal or teak which are far more expensive, and so on. It is interesting that the construction materials suggested can be produced in small industries with a much higher employment potential, lower investments and no foreign exchange outlay at all, as compared to the prevalent materials.¹¹ On every count these low-cost housing techniques are far superior to the conventional ones in vogue today.

Displacement of Large by Small-Scale Industry

Sceptics might wonder whether displacement of large by small industry is at all feasible. There are at least three areas known to us where it has happened. The first two are in the engineering industry. Some of the well-known integrated plants manufacturing electric ceiling fans and bicycles have closed down essentially because new entrants into these fields resorted to extensive subcontracting. Only the final stages

of testing, assembling and manufacturing one or two key components are carried out by those who market the finished products. But we do not have any comprehensive data on these two sectors. Much more documented is the story of the textile industry. Towards the close of the nineteenth century handloom cloth had 70 percent of the market share; by 1948-50 the picture was reversed, the mill sector claiming 80 percent of the total. In cotton cloth the decentralized sector, that is powerloom, handloom and khadi, managed to capture more than half the market by 1975-76. Impelled by the profit motive the mill sector may be shifting from coarse and medium to fine and superfine cotton, and more particularly to man-made fibres; the overall growth in mill sector output in 1961-73 for these three groups of products were respectively,—22 percent, +30 percent and +114 percent. Even after including non-cotton fabrics, the mill sector's output fell from 4413 to 4306 million metres over the same period when cotton cloth output of the decentralised sector went up by a little over 50 percent from 2376 to 3594 million metres. Within the latter sector it is not easy to get a reliable breakdown between the three subsectors for every year. For 1963 handlooms (including khadi) accounted for over two-thirds of the decentralized sector, but fell to 60 percent in 1970-71 and 55 percent in 1977-78. Khadi production, according to an estimate, went up from 60 to 70 million sq metres between 1968-69 and 1972-73, while both total cotton cloth output and the decentralised sector's output remained rather static; another estimate for khadi indicates a fall in quantity from 85 to 72 million sq metres, but a rise in value from Rs 26.8 to Rs 64.1 crores between 1965-66 and 1977-78.¹⁸

The increasing ascendancy of the decentralized sector is at the root of the widespread sickness in the textile industry. The large number of millhands involved undoubtedly represents a big social problem. There may be a temptation on the part of any government, including one led by the left parties, to go "all out" in defending the jobs. That, however, as we saw in the earlier section, would be a short-term approach; in the long run there will be fewer jobs all around. A second and more dangerous approach is the one evolved by the Congress regime and continued by the Janata party. It consists in promoting imports as well as domestic production of man-made fibres, particularly, polyester and nylon which are more lucrative, and giving loans on a large scale to textile mills to enable them to introduce the latest machinery that can turn out man-made fabrics and raise labour productivity. The concessions in respect of excise duty given in the Central budgets for 1977-78 and 1978-79 point to the same direction. These policy changes might help to freeze the existing market shares of the mill sector, if not reverse the trend. The Left Front government through its differential sales taxes can counteract (within West Bengal) such Central policies which are likely to aggravate the crisis in employment.

To take another example: the footwear industry in our country presents a remarkable picture of highly mechanized factories supplying a part of the market, while the rest comes from cottage industry units located in a few areas like Agra, Calcutta, and so on. The large organized sector companies purchase a substantial portion of the cottage sector output at very low prices and then resell it to the consumers under their own brand names with a big profit margin. A study of 4000 cottage units at Agra found that the average fixed and working capital per worker amounted to Rs 350 and Rs 200 respectively. Against an installed daily capacity of 45 pairs per unit, the actual production in 1975 was only 20. These units realized an average sales price of Rs 17 per pair as against retail prices of a little less than Rs 30 for open-toe leather shoes, Rs 50-70 for closed-toe leather shoes and over Rs 100 for the fashionable ones. The quality was good enough for a good many to be exported. Owing to the lack of finance and marketing facilities middlemen (individuals or companies) entered the scene and took away the cream of profits.¹⁸ A well-run public sector or cooperative agency could help to expand the market by lowering prices substantially.

The irrigation pumpset industry is one more industry where production units of different sizes thrive side by side. Out of an average annual sales of 470,000 pumps in 1969-74 more than one half came from the small-scale sector. The district of Coimbatore alone turned out 40 to 50 percent of the national total. A study of 35 small units in the district showed that many of these started with a capital of Rs 10,000 only; of the owners as many as nine were industrial workers earlier in their career, six were industry supervisors and four were clerks. It was further observed that labour costs in small units (up to 50 workers) were lower than in large units mainly due to the lower wage rates; the former also incurred lower overhead costs. A significant part of the production by small units was bought up by large units and sold in the latter's brand name. Another substantial part was disposed off through dealers who charged a commission of 30 to 40 percent, leaving for the manufacturer a margin of 10 to 15 percent only. Few small units sold their wares directly to the cultivators; when they did so it was at a price dictated by the large manufacturers. Lastly, the survey found that all but one of the actual users of pumps manufactured by the small units were satisfied with the product quality.¹⁴ A more energetic intervention by some public sector organ could greatly reduce the market price of pumps and thus help the growth of agricultural production.

So far we have mentioned the products and processes which are already known to be highly suitable for small-scale production. With a simultaneous effort on the part of scientists, engineers and workers, the areas can be vastly expanded. The state government, apart from encouraging such development, can also make representations to the Centre so that the list of industries which are reserved for the small sector and

from which large units are banned, can be correspondingly amended. The SAs may also keep a vigil on competing large industries across the country which surreptitiously increase their capacities beyond the licensed quanta. Such practices, as numerous government and other reports have brought out, have been rampant in the past.

Indeed, the Janata government at the Centre is well aware of this phenomenon and there are proposals to amend the Industries Development and Regulation Act to prevent such poaching by big industries. Concurrently, there are moves to expand the area reserved for the small sector. Already the list has been expanded from 180 to 500 items;¹⁵ a further list of 1600 items has been suggested in various quarters.¹⁶

The Wage Question

In some circles it is believed that small capitalists thrive through super-exploitation, that is by paying far lower wages than the large-scale units. The wage-differential is an indisputable fact. But there is no evidence whatsoever that either the rate of exploitation (the ratio of profit to wages) or the rate of profits (the ratio of profit to fixed and circulating capital) is higher in the small than in the large sector. If the profit rate and the share of material costs in the selling price are the same in the two sectors, the essential difference between them would seem to lie in the fact that the small sector employs more workers at lower wages because it uses less of machinery per worker. Actually, all data indicate a much higher profitability for the large sector, only a fraction of which is passed on to the worker in the form of higher wages. In a situation of mass unemployment, a relative expansion of the labour-intensive small sector (at the cost of the large sector) is better for the toiling masses as a whole as long as the wage rates in the former ensures a 'tolerable' or 'conventional' level of living for the worker. If the level of wages was to be the main consideration and the employment aspect was secondary, then one should not only welcome large-scale industries but more specifically all measures for mechanization and automation which are generally accompanied by higher wages for the existing work force. Fortunately, trade union movements in this country (and also abroad) have resisted such moves to the best of their abilities.

To sum up: contrary to the widely held belief that a state government under the Indian constitution is an impotent entity which must accept the existing socio-economic structure in its entirety, we feel that it has the powers to bring about an appreciable change in the industrial landscape working well within the currently accepted framework. Provided that the government is determined enough, and provided that the left parties are able to organize cooperatives of small producers, it is quite possible to force big business to contract to a certain extent, thereby increasing total industrial production and employment through small industries. Insofar as this policy succeeds, the government should be

able to withstand pressures from the capitalists and workers in shrinking units; the latter at least can easily be reabsorbed in expanding small units.

Support from the Left Front government alone cannot lead to a significant shift in our industrial structure towards small units. In the absence of a wider socio-political movement, the bureaucracy is likely to subvert, consciously or unconsciously, the good intentions of a handful of left-wing ministers at the top. The invisible red tape alone can suffice to kill many a good idea. Above all vested interests exist at every stage. Thus there will be enormous problems in canalizing government and public sector orders to small units, in procuring the requisite raw materials and in arranging timely finance.

Political Prerequisites

The impasse can be broken only if there is a set of militant associations of small producers. The mere existence of associations or co-operatives is not enough. Thousands of such bodies exist in different parts of India. With rare exceptions these are invariably controlled by big industrialists, traders or landlords who cleverly contrive to misappropriate the lion's share of the benefits. Consequently, prices remain high and market expansion is thwarted. The vicious circle can be broken only by the entry of politically motivated cadres into the scene, who can also provide organizational leadership to groups of direct producers. Some of these cadres may also tend to become corrupt; this can be kept in check if left parties take a direct interest. Similar risks are also there in the trade union field, but the problem is by no means insurmountable.

Once such militant bodies come into being they could put necessary pressure on the governmental agencies, financial institutions and so on in order to obtain legitimate facilities. Moreover, new markets may be explored, especially among politically affine sections. Thus trade unions can be encouraged to form consumer cooperatives to supply the consumption goods normally purchased by its members. It is not difficult, for example, to conceive of a tie between a Garden Reach trade union on the one hand, and a Howrah Weavers' cooperative and a Watgunje tailors' cooperative on the other, so that most clothing needs of the Garden Reach workers' families can be met without the mediation of big industrialists and traders. The workers' cash outlays are also likely to go down sharply, given the very high profit margin at each stage of manufacturing and distribution under existing conditions. The tie-up can be extended to a whole range of other commodities and regions. Further, on the buyers' side, similar cooperatives may be formed among large sections of the urban population if the left parties make serious efforts. Similarly, the Kisan Sabhas, too, can be mobilized to the same end, provided of course that the goods in question cannot be produced within the villages. Attempts to forge consumers' coopera-

tives at various levels would be greatly strengthened if, as we argued earlier, a general ideological thrust against consumerism is launched at the same time.

Viewed in this way, the expansion of small industries is basically a political question. The presence of a Left Front government at Writers Building can undoubtedly boost the prospects, but such a government is neither necessary nor sufficient. If the left parties have a mass base, and if they are convinced about the political and economic rationale for the development of small industries, it is possible to make considerable headway even in the absence of a left government. Conversely, if small industries rely exclusively on material support from the government, they cannot make much headway. Hence the primary responsibility lies squarely with mass-based left parties; the cause has to be taken up in earnest whether or not they have a toe-hold on the governmental machinery.

RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION

With all possible assistance from the government and outside scientists, technologists, marketing experts, and with the best possible organization on their own part, the urban small industries or village-based industries catering to urban markets cannot grow beyond a point. For, most of the existing markets are saturated and small industries are bound to face stiffer and stiffer competition as they invade more and more of the territory now held by big industries. To some extent the victory of labour-intensive small-scale industries over the capital-intensive large industries will *ipso facto* lead to an expansion of employment and the market; yet this expansion, too, cannot exceed certain limits. Thus even under the most favourable assumptions one cannot posit a self-sustaining breakthrough on the industrial front simply by enabling small-scale to replace wherever possible the existing large-scale industries.

Indeed, the options so far discussed are somewhat analogous to the import-substitution kind of industrialization pursued at the national level in India as well as other Third World countries. We have taken for granted both the nature of products and the target class of consumers; only the technologies to be adopted and the organizational structure are allowed to vary in a manner beneficial to the direct producers. Unless the first two parameters are changed as well, the urban or urban-market-oriented small industries programme will eventually run into the same blind alley as the earlier import-substitution strategy.

Since most of the underemployed poor live in the rural areas, any meaningful industrialization drive must involve them directly. Agricultural improvements along with the development of rural industries satisfying the needs of the rural population provide the obvious means of reducing rural unemployment and of raising the living standards of

the rural masses. Between agriculture and rural industry there is at the moment much more of complementarity than of competition—and this is likely to remain so until all rural manpower is fully employed. With few exceptions no rural industries would be viable unless they supply inputs to agriculture or process agricultural raw materials for consumption within small localities. One may draw an historical parallel. In the early stages of industrialization in England one of the two leading industries, namely, the iron industry, found more than half of its market in agriculture; wooden implements of various kinds were replaced by those made of iron to enhance operational efficiency.¹⁷ Similar efforts are equally needed in our context.

That rural industries are needed on a wide front has been appreciated among large sections. The most notable votary was of course Gandhi. Yet three decades after his followers captured the reins of government, very little has been achieved. The KVIC under Gandhian inspiration has made at most some interesting experiments. In West Bengal there have only been a handful of voluntary institutions like the Abhay Ashram which run a number of rural industries like charkha, handloom, bee-keeping and dairying.

Link with the Class Struggle

The basic reason why these attempts have hitherto failed to percolate to the masses is the promoters' failure to link their missionary work with the needs and aspirations of the masses. By side-tracking class struggles if not acting as allies of the upper classes, the Gandhian champions of rural industries presented the latter as a purely 'moral' or 'rational' and class-neutral method of improving the conditions of the rural people.

Under contemporary Indian conditions the rural rich, that is the landlords, money-lenders and traders, often rolled into one, have nothing to gain and a great deal to lose from the development of rural industries employing, even if seasonally, large numbers of the rural poor. If the employment situation were to improve radically, much of the current modes of exploitation through rack-renting, excessively low wages of agricultural labour, usurious rates of interest, large trading margins on agricultural and other products sold in the villages, would be in jeopardy. Looked at differently, the rural rich do not have a shortage of cash and are able to buy whatever they need from the existing markets. Since rural industries are unlikely either to improve on the quality of products or to reduce costs as compared to urban industries, the rural rich cannot have any interest in rural industries as potential consumers. Of late, prosperous farmers and landlords in many parts of the country have taken to the family-sized gobar-gas plants. However, it has been noted that each such plant barely requires the full-time services of one person.¹⁸

Nevertheless, can one not rely on the rural rich to organize certain industries catering to the needs of the rural poor and employing some of them? This idea is superficially attractive. Since the rural rich have liquid capital, they might ideally fit into the mould of the classical entrepreneur. But capitalist enterprises in our rural milieu have not had any success. The reasons are not basically psychological, but economic. Such an enterprise must by its very nature be market-oriented. Markets are well-saturated, as we have noted more than once. To sustain a new enterprise a new market has to be created; it is impossible, we shall shortly demonstrate, for capitalist enterprises to do so even on a theoretical plane.

For all these reasons we believe that a worthwhile plan for generating substantial employment through rural industries can have no role in it for the rural rich; the latter have to be excluded from any organization geared to rural industries. Such an organization must also involve the active participation of the rural poor, as will presently be shown. Conversely, as one should expect strong hostility from the rich, the existence of a powerful poor peasants' organization is again a necessary precondition.

In our villages the primary contradiction lies in the sphere of land relations, land being the principal source of livelihood. Unity among the toiling masses can be built primarily by focusing on the land question. A struggle against various types of feudal remnants must constitute the *raison d'être* of poor peasants' organizations. In general, only after appreciable progress has been made and reflected in an altered balance of class forces in favour of the direct producers, can the peasants' organizations consolidate their position by organizing rural industries.

Political Base for a Cooperative Movement

In large tracts of rural West Bengal, as we noted earlier, powerful movements took root in the late sixties and early seventies; despite more than half a decade of inactivity under semi-fascist terror, the peasant leaders do not seem to have lost their hold. In those areas where unity already prevails among the poor peasants, and is reflected in a strong organization, the chance of a cooperative movement are bright, while in politically more backward areas the chances are somewhat better owing to the existence of the Left Front government, though the latter can by no means ensure the successful functioning of peasants' cooperatives anywhere.¹⁹

Peasants' cooperatives, comprising in the main of poor and landless peasants, but also with the support of middle peasants would obviously have to fight first and foremost on the agricultural front. The cooperatives have to arrange for the supply of seeds, manures, fertilizers, pesticides, water and so on to the members' farms. They have to arrange for crop loans as well as consumption loans either through mutual aid or

through external agencies like the government, banks and cooperatives. They have to fight for the tenancy rights of their *bargadar* members, and for higher wages for agricultural workers. In short, they would have to ensure that their members are not dispossessed of their present holdings and obtain 'fair' returns from their toils—whether on their own or on others' land. Various programmes of agricultural improvement like irrigation, drainage, levelling of land, introduction of new crops and inputs within the means of its members—all these have to be explored.

In a parallel fashion the cooperatives may conceive of rural industries, mainly catering to the rural poor. An illustration would clarify. At present the typical rural family belonging to the bottom 80 percent of the population probably buys about six metres of cloth per head per annum. The cloth is usually of coarse or low medium quality, costing over Rs 3 per metre. Annual per capita expenses could be reckoned at Rs 20 or Rs 100 per family of five persons. Instead of buying Rs 10,000 worth of cloth from outside, let us suppose that a cooperative of 100 families decides to buy the raw cotton, install the minimum necessary number of charkhas and looms, and get the work done within the village. A simple box charkha of the KVIC costs around Rs 30 now. Output per eight hour day varies between four and five hanks, that is, between 0.1 and 0.12 kg of yarn. A very good handloom should cost around Rs 1000 and turn out at least 15 metres per eight hour day from 1.0 kg of yarn. Assuming (a) that a charkha can be operated sequentially by several persons because of the simplicity of the mechanism; (b) that a loom though it requires rather expert hands, can also be run by at least a couple of persons; (c) a standard eight hour shift for the charkha and for the loom, each being operated for 300 days per year, the community would need only 10 charkhas and one handloom to produce 3000 metres of cloth. Further, not more than two carding machines would be needed each costing Rs 500. Fixed investments then amount to Rs 2300. However, let us allow for an extra loom for the cooperative and one charkha for each family; even then investments would amount to only Rs 6000 for all the cooperative members. The value of raw cotton (including 15 percent wastage which may, however, be used in bedding and so on) required for the community, should not exceed Rs 3500 at current rates. Thus the community as a whole can not only recover its fixed and raw material outlays in one year, but also make a small saving as against its previous cash purchases. The cash savings would increase if some of the tools could be manufactured locally. Also, a small number of more efficient ambar charkhas could simultaneously produce better yarn, reduce cash outlays as well as time spent on spinning, provided each such charkha could be properly handled by a large number of persons. The two-spindle ambar charkha costing about Rs 200 each, produces three times as much yarn as a box charkha per unit of time. As against a

minimum need for three ambar charkhas, if one allows for double that number, fixed investments would amount to less than Rs 4500 for the entire cooperative.²⁰

In the presentation so far we have not allowed for any wage costs. Since it is production outside the market system this may be partly justified. Thus when a woman cards the raw cotton and spins all the yarn needed for her own family, there is no need to attribute any wage costs. But since everybody cannot weave, the weaver has to be paid for his labour. Sometimes it may take the form of exchange-labour; the more indigent members of the cooperative can work, if possible, on the weaver's land. Others, however, would have to pay in cash or kind; the terms can be more advantageous than on the market. Even if a family pays at the existing market rate amounting to about Rs 2 for a whole sari or dhoti of five metres, it will still save a good deal. Against annual cash purchases of Rs 100 for 30 metres of cloth as at present, the family would have to spend Rs 35 on raw cotton and Rs 12 on weaving, or a total of Rs 47 only. Further, the cooperative may charge a small sum of Rs 10-12 per family as hire charges for the use of fixed assets like the carding machines and the charkha; the assumed recoupment period for the cooperative is about five years. Lastly, another small sum amounting to a few rupees only would have to be spent on bleaching, dyeing, and so on, which can again be organized within the cooperative. Thus every family could make a cash saving of about Rs 40 per year—by no means a negligible sum.

For the cooperative to work successfully, the members must agree not to buy any clothes from outside; one can easily predict that temptations will come in the form of cheaper clothes from traders who would lose their existing market. Also the landlords might appear overgenerous and offer annual bonus in the form of clothes to their agricultural workers. Presently, most landlords do pay such bonuses to their regular farm servants; the latter should ask for cash payments instead. Secondly, the experience of poor peasants' cooperatives in other countries shows that one of the most baffling issues is the equitable distribution of benefits. Since in the example under discussion there is no provision for an increase in cloth consumption,²¹ the main area of conflict would be in the distribution of work. Since the charkhas can be used by everybody, there is hardly any problem. Difficulties would arise with the handlooms which can be operated by a handful at the most. The exact solution will necessarily vary from place to place.

Other Possibilities

Now that the prerequisites of cooperative formation have been spelled out one can easily show why the rural rich cannot set up such an undertaking along capitalist lines. The enterprise becomes uneconomic the moment wage payments are allowed for. Even with the more

productive ambar charkhas khadi cannot compete with mill yarn except through subsidies. Further, there would be no assured market for the village product as everybody would have to pay in cash. Thus such a scheme cannot get off the ground without massive governmental subsidies, which is unlikely to materialize.

Another item for perhaps immediate introduction is the *dhenki* or rice-pounders, which we already discussed. In this case, too, the job can be easily accomplished by most able-bodied men and women and few problems of work-distribution are likely to rise. Besides, *dhenkis* do survive in many parts of our countryside, though they are not used as often as they might be.

Other industrial activities which could be organized to satisfy existing needs are blacksmithy and pottery. In both respects the village industries are dying in most parts of the country and the needs are met from outside purchases. A crucial factor would be the provision of fuel which is in short supply. Besides, fuel for domestic cooking also poses a number of problems in many areas. For all these purposes the idea of an energy forest has been suggested. By earmarking a small area unsuitable for crop production and planting it intensively and in a planned manner with specially selected fast-growing trees, one might get as much wood as can reasonably be utilized for local purposes.

At a more experimental stage is the proposal for a community level biogas plant which would not only convert animal and human excreta into organic manure but also yield biogas which is a versatile modern fuel suitable for practically any purpose. Cooking, lighting, running industries or agricultural pumps—all these would be competing uses. Most gobar plants used in India have been designed by the KVIC. Till mid-1974 there were 6858 plants throughout the country. During the next one year as many as 7818 plants were either installed or under construction. About 82 percent of all plants as of mid-1975 were concentrated in Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra and Uttar Pradesh. Central Government subsidy on these amounted to Rs. 1.38 crores and loans to Rs 3.95 crores. West Bengal had only 71 plants and obtained Rs 17,000 as loans. While details are not available, it is generally believed that most plants are owned by individual families from among the rural rich. Economically, community-size plants are much superior.²¹ R Bhatia has questioned the desirability of family-size biogas units from a social point of view by comparing the costs of biogas with those of a conventional fuel like coal.²² For manure alone the much cheaper compost pits would suffice. For India as a whole there are startling estimates on the benefits from scientific composting. In 1972-73 the country used chemical fertilizers to the extent of 1.8m tons of nitrogen, 0.6 m tons of phosphate and 0.3 m tons of potassium. If only half of the available animal and human excreta were composted, it would yield 2.0m tons of nitrogen, 1.0 m tons of phosphate and 1.0 m tons of potas-

sium. Food production could rise by 30 million tons, creating additional employment for 15 million persons.²³ Such pits or the community biogas plant would have another major consequence: rural sanitation and public health would be radically improved. A good many of the intestinal diseases which are rampant in rural India may have been caused to a large extent by unhealthy sanitary practices. It is also worth noting that collection of human excreta in particular may pose severe problems owing to religious or caste prejudices; this taboo can only be overcome in the wake of a political-cultural breakthrough initiated by a peasant movement. Preachings by urban intellectuals and other do-gooders are likely to fall on deaf ears. The case for biogas will be discussed at great length in a later section.

Apart from those just mentioned, many more possibilities for rural industries may open up once scientific surveys and experimentation on a grand scale are conducted with the active participation of the toiling masses. Some of these will be broached in the next section.

Mode of Financing

One important lacuna in our analysis so far is the absence of discussion on the mode of financing both the initial fixed capital as well as working capital required by rural industries. One way is to take advantage of the existing financial and other institutions like the commercial banks, cooperative banks, the KVIC, the Handloom Board and so on. There is also a legitimate fear among the leftists that a close liaison with the external agencies permeated by the capitalist spirit may subvert the spirit of self-reliance among the poor peasants; within the cooperative the 'fixers' who can arrange for loans are likely to gain pre-eminence. Besides, at some future date when an anti-left onslaught is started by the ruling classes, the cooperatives may collapse if they are too dependent on outside sources of institutional support. Thus we do not believe that a uniform policy should be followed. Depending on the intensity of political struggle, in some areas a strong reliance on outside finance may be justified, which may speed up the initial growth process; in others a slower but more self-reliant path may be pursued.

However, one should not entertain too many illusions about the prospects of rural industries. Even if these are correctly conceived, these cannot but scratch the surface of the deep-rooted problem of unemployment and poverty. Its major virtue is that it makes a beginning in the right direction. No dramatic change is possible without removing the present ruling classes from their seats of power.²⁴ Nevertheless, inward-looking industrial cooperatives set up under the leadership of the poor and landless peasants would certainly make a much larger contribution on a durable basis to the reduction of unemployment than any other economic programme in sight. Last but not the least, successes and failures today would provide most valuable lessons for the future.

As we saw with small industries, the Left Front government can make a significant contribution to the growth of rural industries by providing the initial capital, fixed and circulating. In view of the small size of capital outlays, every family belonging to the category of rural poor in the whole of West Bengal can be helped to pursue the path of self-development, provided they can form their own cooperative. A simple numerical exercise will establish this point. Including in the "poor" not only the landless and poor peasants who depend on their earnings as hired workers, but also the lower middle peasants, that is those who are in indigent circumstances, have rather small plots of land, hire themselves out to work on others' land, one may reckon the proportion of the "poor" at about 80 percent of the rural population. Currently, West Bengal should have a population of about 50 million of which three-fourths should be rural. Assuming an average family size of five the number of poor families in the rural areas should not exceed six million. Out of the annual plan outlay exceeding Rs 300 crores for the whole state during recent years, it should not be difficult to earmark a mere Rs 60 crores for the development of rural industries to be run by the rural poor. Allocation per family would then amount to Rs 100 while the khadi-cum-handloom project discussed earlier required only Rs 60 per family. More projects could be taken up for implementation in the very first year, not to speak of the possibilities in subsequent years. Obviously, the schemes need not be confined to industries alone. Besides, sums could be spent on large-scale experimentation with new ideas which might later on be replicated in every single village to create additional jobs on a durable basis as well as to satisfy the felt needs of the rural poor.

Once again it is worth reiterating that funds are not the primary constraint. If there is a class-conscious poor peasants' organization, a serious beginning can be made even without massive aid from the government. In any case, such organizations must brace themselves up for the days when there is no friendly government at the Writers Building to protect them against assaults from the rural rich and its allies in the bureaucracy.

(To be continued)

¹ "Sale of Janata Saries in West Bengal Encouraging", *Statesman*, 25 September 1977.

² "Higher Share for State Janata Cloth Output in Handloom Sector", *Hindu*, 15 August 1978.

³ "No Progress in Handloom Industry", *Statesman*, 24 September 1977.

⁴ Based on personal interview with a KVIC official.

⁵ "Rs 10 crore Plan for Cottage Industry", *Economic Times*, 21 September 1977.

⁶ See footnote 4.

⁷ The eighteenth report of the Committee on Public Undertakings (Fifth Lok Sabha, quoted in "Pharmaceutical Industry: Public Sector at Private Sector's Service", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 8 May 1976.

⁸ *Report of the Committee on Drugs and Pharmaceutical Industry*, New Delhi, 1975, p 265.

- ⁹ S Lall and S Bibile, "Political Economy of Controlling Transnationals: Pharmaceutical Industry in Sri Lanka, 1972-76", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August 1977.
- ¹⁰ I am indebted to Mr Hitesh Sanyal for this information.
- ¹¹ The data are taken from the *Report of the Expert Committee on Performance Approach to Cost Reduction in Building Construction*, Government of Kerala, 1974.
- ¹² All the data on textiles in this paragraph are taken from (a) various issues of the *Economic Survey*, (b) *Draft Fifth Five Year Plan 1974-79*, Vol II, p 163, (c) M Eapen, "Emerging Trends in Cotton Textile Consumption", *Social Scientist*, January-February, 1977, and (d) *Draft Five Year Plan 1978-83*, p 183. From the last source we may also note that in 1977-78 the mill sector produced 4200 million meters, while the handlooms and powerlooms contributed 5200 million meters. *Ibid.*, p 197. However, on p 183 it is stated that 4100 million meters came from the decentralized sector in 1977-78.
- ¹³ Letter by the General Secretary, Agra Shoe Manufacturers' Association, "Footwear Prices", *Economic Times*, 27 March 1976; and "Footwear Workers of Agra Lead a Miserable Life", *Economic Times*, 13 January 1976.
- ¹⁴ M Cartillier, "Role of Small Industries in Economic Development: Irrigation Pumpset Industry in Coimbatore", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1 November 1975.
- ¹⁵ See the Statement on Industrial Policy before the Lok Sabha on 23 December 1977 by the Minister for Industries.
- ¹⁶ "800 Items May be Reserved for Small Sector", *Economic Times*, 5 November 1977.
- ¹⁷ P Bairoch, *Le Tiers-Monde dans l'impasse: Le démarrage économique de XVIIIe au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1971, p 53.
- ¹⁸ R Bhatia, "Economic Appraisal of Bio-Gas Units in India: Framework for Social Benefit Cost Analysis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August 1977.
- ¹⁹ Even in landlord-dominated areas with no immediate prospects of land struggle, political activists from outside can make an entry by trying to organize a cooperative of poor peasants and craftsmen to supply their mutual needs or external markets. The very success of such a venture may generate the hostility of landlords and may lead to its collapse. Yet the failure itself should raise the consciousness of the oppressed majority and prepare the ground for a more determined struggle later.
- ²⁰ The data on annual cloth requirements are based on NSS estimates and taken from M Eapen, *op. cit.* The costs of carding machines, charkhas and looms have been obtained through personal enquiries. For ginned raw cotton we have allowed for a high price of Rs 1000 per quintal, while the actual November 1977 price for unginned cotton stood at Rs 350. One may note that the Agricultural Prices Commission recommended a minimum support price of Rs 256 and the actual in 1976-77 was claimed to be Rs 450. "Higher Support Price for Cotton Urged," *Statesman*, 4 November 1977.
- ²¹ "Financing of Gobar Gas Plants", *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*, August 1976.
- ²² Bhatia, *op. cit.*
- ²³ A Makhani, "Energy Policy for Rural India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, August 1977. The author is indeed aware that not all cowdung is burnt as fuel. Hence it may not be possible to collect 50 percent [of the total available for the compost pits, after deducting whatever is currently used as manure.
- ²⁴ This is not a dogmatic assertion. In every country where power was seized by a Communist Party through armed struggle, the problems of unemployment and malnutrition vanished into thin air almost in no time. The longest interval was in the USSR running into more than a decade, but then the USSR was the pioneer and had no previous experience to fall back upon.

BOOK REVIEWS

Review Article

Agrarian Unrest in West Bengal

SWASTI MITTER, PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN WEST BENGAL; THEIR IMPACT ON AGRARIAN CLASS RELATIONS SINCE 1967, University of Cambridge, Department of Land Economy, Occasional Paper No 8, 1977, pp 85, price £ 1.80.

IN THIS readable little book, Swasti Mitter presents a bird's eye view of the agrarian unrest that was triggered in West Bengal by the formation of its first non-Congress Government in 1967 and that persisted through the pre-Emergency period. She has been able to bring out, with condensation and clarity, the crux of the whole matter as well as the relevance and rationale of the unrest—all this within the space of only some 50 pages. The remaining pages are devoted to its specifics as were experienced in a selected area, Sonarpur. Incidentally, Sonarpur is a small rural area in the vicinity of Calcutta. It was once a storm-centre of share-croppers' struggles during 1946-50 and has again been activated in recent months.¹

The central thesis of the study is that West Bengal's peasant movements of the period 1967-74 were not only "a militant protest against the non-implementation of liberal land reform legislation" of the Congress regime, but they also "shook the political power structure based upon the concentration of landholding in West Bengal and left its mark on class relations in rural areas." That a broad-based middle peasant economy was coming up, says the author, was a clearly visible trend. How this happened has been briefly discussed in the book.

Land Reforms in the Post-Independence Period

In Congress-dominated semi-feudal West Bengal, post-independence land reform legislation had built-in loopholes. Legal rights and securities offered to the share-croppers, and minimum wages to agricultural workers, therefore, proved to be completely illusory. The resumption and distribution of landlords' surplus lands in excess of

ceiling was also held up by legal complexities. It was in such a situation that the first non-Congress Government was voted to power, and electoral support increasingly shifted in favour of CPI(M) in 1967 and 1969. Despite impatience in Naxalbari and a few other pockets, CPI(M) took its own time in preparing the poor peasants for its programme of land seizure and crop protection movement. It was in 1969 that its programme began to be implemented in a big way by the rural poor, with the Government conniving to act as an instrument of their struggles. This, according to the author, "captured the imagination of the rural poor" (p 44). This also led to the dismissal of the CPI (M)-led Government.

With the ousting of the United Front Government from power in March 1970, a reign of terror was let loose by the Congress regime on the CPI(M)'s expanded rural bases, and the 1972 election was turned into a mockery to engineer the Party's electoral defeat. The Party however continued to work amongst the peasantry under imposed semi-legal conditions. The movement nevertheless was able to achieve some of its objectives. Two of Hare Krishna Konar's proposed pieces of legislation were subsequently put into the statute book by the Congress Government "with minor alterations" (p 47), giving the share-croppers thereby substantial legal rights (at least on paper) over their lands and crops, and also limited opportunities of getting back their alienated lands. The major achievements were however "politicisation of the poor peasantry on militant lines" and the expansion of the CPI (M) bases amongst them. "While the movement successfully crushed the power of the big landowners", the author concludes, "it also brought into focus a new antagonism among the different strata of the peasantry, share-croppers and the landless labourers"(p 76). But were the big landowners (*jotdars*) really crushed? Or, was it that such a prospect was only just opened up?

The CPI (M) and the Agrarian Issue

'Viable' (?) sharecroppers and 'middle peasants' are interchangeable terms for the author (p 61). An interesting finding of the author is that, in the course of the movement, the CPI (M) found itself in the rural areas largely identified and/or aligned with the interests of the agricultural workers and poor peasants; and the CPI, with the share-cropper middle peasant interests. The point however appears to be over-stretched when the author further argues:

...the share croppers found it easier to identify their class interest with the ideology and programme of CPI, which proclaimed the present stage of revolution as primarily a national democratic revolution. In the context of agriculture, it meant in particular demanding occupancy rights for the share croppers. CPI (M) was reluctant to take such a step for fear of creating a solidified middle

peasant base, which might prove extremely revisionary in the programme of a socialist revolution" (p 50).

No evidence has however been put forward to prove this reluctance or to show that the CPI (M) failed the sharecroppers in their struggle for occupancy rights. To suit her purpose, the author (on p 79) only misconstrues the CPI (M) Central Committee's warning that the tenancy problem not being "the predominant issue before the vast rural masses", was not to be exaggerated "out of proportion and out of reality" in preference to "the need to concentrate on agricultural labourers, their demands, their struggles and organization."²

The CPI (M) was evidently committed to defending tenants' right to ownership of lands wherever they still continued to cultivate, while "the tenants who had been evicted (for years) and had become landless" were to get their share of surplus land "along with other rural poor in the course of the struggle against landlordism"³ A distinction was to be maintained, said CPI(M), between these two categories of tenants. While applying such a policy in a complicated rural situation, some mistakes were unavoidable, as the Sonarpur case-study suggests. But this provides no justification for the author to suggest that CPI (M) was opposed to giving occupancy rights to the tenants, as a matter of policy; or that Hare Krishna Konar dismissed the demand as sheer economism. For the latter information, the sole evidence put forward is the author's interview with a CPI leader (p 65).

The Sonarpur Movement

The micro-study of the Sonarpur movement is surely useful; but then, based as it is largely on interviews and short flying visits to the area (during July 1973 –January 1974), a degree of distortion of facts in the matter of details, gathered in that process, cannot be ruled out. No adequate care seems to have been taken for cross-checking the information so gathered or for utilizing diverse sources like the relevant proceedings of the Legislature, for throwing more light on the subject.

There are other lapses too. On p 23, the author suggests that the classification of the rural population into five major groups by the three Communist Parties in India is largely modelled on Mao's 1933 classification of the Chinese rural society. Perhaps, it would have been more correct to say that the Indian Communist movement, in this connection, also took into consideration Lenin's classification of the peasantry into five major groups.⁴

As a piece of academic research, Swasti Mitter's study, perhaps, falls slightly short of the conventional standard, since it is neither meticulously exhaustive nor methodologically perfect. The attempt at equating sharecroppers with middle peasants also needs a further probe. Nevertheless, she has succeeded in presenting the issues involved, first in a lucid macro-frame, and then in a micro-frame, thereby putting flesh

and blood into her story. The journalistic flavour, if any, makes the book all the more interesting. To the reviewer, the book has, on the whole, been provokingly instructive and refreshing. For it is also relevant to what is happening today in rural West Bengal after the CPI (M)-led Government has once more emerged as the instrument of popular struggles, particularly against the big landowners. Class struggle in rural areas is again in full play.

The book helps recapitulate what exactly happened during 1967-74 and pick up the antecedents of the present determined drive in West Bengal for establishing proletarian hegemony in rural society, in anticipation of the conquest of State power in a not-too-distant future. The author rightly points out that the West Bengal peasant movement was no longer spontaneous since the sixties, but was (as it is now) a "response of the peasants to the messages of a Marxist class war". We wish, the author comes back to Sonarpur for another field-trip, and this time for a longer one, to see how the conflicting interests of the semi-proletarian share croppers (who are middle peasants according to the author) and the rural proletariat are being resolved in the concrete situation of struggle, in their bid for breaking the power structure based on the concentration of land-holding. However, one is yet to see a broad-based middle peasant economy emerging as an alternative to what the Chaudhury Charan Singhs stand for, that is, landlord-rich peasant capitalism. It is at this point that the unity of all left and democratic forces will have to play a crucial role in West Bengal and elsewhere in India.

AMALENDU GUHA

¹ *Baromas* (Bengali monthly, Calcutta), Vol 1, No 3, August 1978, pp 92-95.

² Sundarayya, *Resolution on Certain Agrarian Issues*, Muzaffarpur, 1973, p 37.

³ Sundarayya, *ibid*, pp 37-38.

⁴ Lenin, "Preliminary Draft Thesis on the Agrarian Question for the Second Congress of the Communist International," *Collected Works*, Moscow, Vol 41, pp 152-64. In this context a mention may be made also of the four-fold classification of the Russian rural population Lenin made, before the 1905 Revolution, in his *To the Rural Poor*.

RAJNI KOTHARI, *DEMOCRATIC POLITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIA*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1977.

RAJNI KOTHARI'S *Democratic Polity and Social Change in India* is different in many respects from his earlier work on Indian politics. He does not, for example, subscribe to the consensual model he had outlined in *Politics in India*. Rather, he considers the crisis in the Indian political system and, more significantly, entertains the possibility of social transformation. The roots of the crisis, according to him, lie in the realm of politics. He therefore highlights the key role of the Indian political system which in a "developing society provides the dominant ethos to the way different segments are ordered and interrelated" (p 6).

In the second chapter Kothari does well to analyse certain trends in Indian politics which led to the assertion of 'state politics' as opposed to 'national politics' in the post-Nehru era and also to the centralization of power introduced by Mrs Gandhi. This prevented the diffusion of power to the lower levels of polity, partly because power was personalized and not institutionalized and partly because no attempt was made to modify the Westminster model to suit Indian conditions (p 31). He also emphasises the evils of centralization in the economic sphere, which has far-reaching implications for distributive justice. The process of democratization and dispersal of economic justice was stymied by the emergence of powerful interests. This was "largely an outcome of the model of development (adopted in the late fifties) which emphasised urban-based industrialization...through heavy doses of capital-based technology...", leading to the dominance of the administrative system (which) "undermined the Congress party and the electoral processes and functioning of democracy at lower levels of the polity" (p 32).

The general thrust of Kothari's argument is that the present economic crisis is the result of the inadequacy of the present political

system. He therefore recommends the renewal of the 'Basic Model' which, he hopes, would restore "the balance between central initiatives and a decentralised structure of power" (pp 47-48). He also proceeds to suggest ways and means of changing the socio-economic content of the model of development, and recommends various fiscal measures to reduce economic concentration in order to minimise the possibilities of class conflict. The success of the 'model' rests on democratization which Kothari believes, provides the only alternative to revolutionary strategy.

Errors in the Framework of Analysis

There are several shortcomings in Kothari's framework of analysis as well as in his suggestions to renovate and regenerate the system. We confine our discussion to his analysis of class conflict, distributive justice, democratization and revolutionary conflict.

Democratic Polity and Social Change in India concentrates on the defects in the functioning of the Indian political system, but it fails to explain the nature and causes of the crisis even though the book purports to be about that. There are references to the failures in the political sphere; but these have not been related to the larger socio-economic contradictions. It fails to recognise the fact that the Indian political system, apart from being democratic, is capitalist at its base and as such the crisis is essentially of the capitalist system. Therefore his contention that with certain reforms the existing system can deliver the goods is difficult to accept.

Land legislation, for example, has effected certain changes in the Indian countryside. But they have not achieved the desired results, a fact ignored by Kothari. Instead the author concludes that "the worst vestiges of feudalism in land relationships were removed through legislation and the Article on property rights was amended to make this possible" (pp 17-18). He does not recognise that the process of curbing feudal interests has gone hand-in-hand with conscious efforts to develop and foster a class of rich peasants and capitalist landlords. Though the major part of the area under cultivation is within the category of self operated ownership holdings and the area under lease has been considerably reduced, in the country as a whole 3.21 percent of the rural households, each owning 30 acres, hold 23.65 percent of the total land. At the other end of the spectrum, 84 percent own between them only 19.18 percent of the total land. Sharecropping, concealed leasing, usury and concentration of land in a few hands are still characteristic features of production relations in agriculture. Kothari would have done well to take sufficient note of the class nature of land reform in India. Political crisis can be fruitfully understood only if it is seen as a consequence, rather than a cause of socio-economic crisis.

Failure to Differentiate Ideology from Practice

Kothari is unable to differentiate between ideology and practice, or to be more precise, between rhetoric and reality. That is why he cannot see the rationality of progressive ideology and its function in legitimising the system. Kothari observes that in India "there is no scope for the politics of the right", yet he remains unconvinced that in a poor society commitment to 'socialism' is a necessary component of the political theory of the ruling classes.

Kothari does not attempt to critically analyse the ideology of the Congress Party. This leads him to the illusion that the Congress has made left and right irrelevant in Indian politics. This is tantamount to saying that the Congress party is a 'party of the people', a logic which can only be based on the assumption that political parties are above class interests. In India no single class is dominant. As a result the Congress and other political parties represent a confluence of class interests. But this does not prevent the State from acting more or less cohesively on behalf of the monopolists, landlords and rich peasants. Undoubtedly, the bourgeois parties exercise a traditional hold over considerable sections of the masses, and make policy statements and formulate programmes which are determined by the need to maintain a democratic facade. But this does not detract from their class character. To hold such a view is to fall prey to the propaganda about the so-called non-class and purely democratic character of the Indian State. In the same vein is Kothari's distinction between the Nehru and post-Nehru era, which is well taken if he means that the notable feature of Nehru's political framework was its flexibility which gave greater opportunity to various groups to pursue their political and economic interests.

It is surprising that Kothari still subscribes to the theory that the dominance of one party does not conflict with the representation (pp 44-45) of divergent political interests. The acceptance of one-party dominance is based on the misconception that democracy can be the monopoly of a single party, which if at all it means anything, would lead to the erosion of democracy, and to a situation characterised by the centralisation of political power and its concentration in the hands of a few individuals. It is such a development that culminated in the scenario during the emergency in which the Indian union was taken to be the 'political property' of the Congress party 'shareholders' to be governed in the interest of its 'leading proprietor (s)'.

An important aspect of Kothari's explanation of the crisis that has overtaken India during the last decade is that the Indian political system did not intervene effectively to check the growth of powerful interests which ultimately led to the crisis. Basically, his argument is that the system was unsuccessful because the leadership did not ensure distributive justice. Kothari blames the urban-based industrialization

programme for the emergence of what he calls the obstructive structure. He does so mainly because he ignores the production relations without which it is not possible to fully unravel the crisis. Kothari is more concerned with the betrayal of the middle classes and the professionals than with the exploitation perpetrated by the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

Reformist Argument

Kothari isolates distributive justice from the ownership of production, though he recognises that the hereditary right to property is a major cause of connivance of political and economic power (p 92). In spite of this he does not openly and explicitly come out against the right to property. He is more interested in recommending fiscal measures to reduce economic concentration. His effort is to ignore and avoid the ideology of 'left and right' in order to evolve a third approach to constructing an egalitarian society' (p 94). This ideological purity is advocated from the standpoint of efficiency which, Kothari asserts, makes it necessary 'to shift the accent from ownership to management' (p 94). From this proposition it appears that management science is the answer to the inequality that afflicts Indian society. He has very carefully shifted the discussion from the inequitable property structure in capitalism to the problem of management and maintenance of production.

Kothari advocates that distributive justice should be achieved through constitutional reforms. That might be so because incrementalism is a more suitable strategy for the creative amalgamation of capitalism and socialism he has in mind. That might also explain his emphasis on changing law and not class relations. But one is apt to wonder if there is any dearth of 'progressive' laws and policies in India. Kothari's optimistic belief that social justice and economic equality can be achieved through 'constitutional reforms' is, to borrow his own expression, 'day-dreaming', and the assumption that the ruling classes would relinquish power voluntarily is false and misleading.

In the course of discussing the contradictions between the 'distributive and aggregative' (that is, nation-building activities) aspects (pp 17-21) Kothari briefly touches upon the question of class. The brevity itself is an adequate comment on his approach to the class problem. However, he offers a supposedly novel interpretation of the problem by framing it in terms of the middle class versus the nation. He does not attach any importance to class conflicts because he claims that the development in technology and the internationalism of the middle class have rendered the Marxian categories of capitalist-proletarian conflict irrelevant (p 23). These classes are not sufficiently internationalized, whereas the middle class is international as it transcends the relations of production.

Democratization

Democratization is an important component in Kothari's scheme. so much so that he expects it to usher in a revolution in social relations. He maintains that the health of the economy is dependent on the orderliness and democratization of the political system. The evidence for this is found in the uniform growth rate of the economy in the period between 1952-1965 which, in his view, had witnessed the development of democratic institutions, norms, and practices. This implies that the poor economic growth in later years is in some way related to the functioning of the political system. In another place, however, he says that the political system was found wanting in the face of the deteriorating economic situation. This does not uphold his earlier hypothesis that achievements on the political and economic fronts are attained simultaneously. On the contrary it underscores the fact that in the event of an economic crisis, the capacity of the political system to initiate policies for the majority or even concessions for economic relief is severely limited.

The above approach also prevents him from appreciating that democratization in a capitalist society is accepted only so long as the economic system runs well and serves the interests of the exploiting classes. But when the economic crisis deepens, the bourgeoisie and its allies prevaricate and have no hesitation in jettisoning democracy. Then they resort to authoritarian methods to make the system play their tune (this shift was clearly witnessed during the Emergency). Given these trends democratization cannot be depended on as the main stimulus for economic growth. It appears that Kothari wants to underscore to the ruling classes (or elite as he calls it) the necessity of fulfilling some minimum promises in order to neutralise the Communist alternative of class struggle.

Kothari rejects the revolutionary alternative. He says it is neither desirable nor possible. It is undesirable according to Kothari, because the end result will be undemocratic. There is not much point in joining issue with Kothari on the undesirability of revolution as that has to be taken for granted in his framework. Moreover he considers revolution to be impossible in India. This because India is neither highly political nor well integrated nor have the non-revolutionary forms of conflict been exhausted. Does this imply that Communist parties are unaware of the complexity of Indian society which he has brought to light? Otherwise there is no justification for his reminder that Indian society is so complex and full of inner reserves that to think of changing everything at one stroke is sheer 'day-dreaming' (p 39).

The above conclusion is based on a misconception of revolutionary strategy. Revolutionary parties organize and act on the understanding of the principal contradictions in a particular epoch. Revolutionary

struggle is a protracted and complicated process because the contradictions emerging from the political and economic crisis take time to mature into a revolutionary situation. This requires sustained effort to educate and politicise the masses. Kothari is critical of the advocates of revolution precisely for the above reason for he thinks their argument prevents working for "progress progressively" (p 40). Using the same logic the other way round it is evident that Kothari is skirting the issue of change as well. It appears he wants revolutionary changes (assuming Kothari is serious about the democratization programme which requires changes of revolutionary proportions) without revolution.

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